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## PREFACE

THE most ignoble and the most glorious chapters of British history are contained in the present volume. In the seventeenth century, England embarked with all her energy in the traffic in human beings, from which even the conquerors of the Indies shrank, depopulating Africa and disintegrating her primitive societies, systematically and remorselessly, solely inspired by greed. In the eighteenth century, Liverpool and Bristol were the foremost slave ports of the world. Snatched away from their homes, those black people that survived the terrors of the Middle Passage, were, upon their arrival in our dominions, rigorously maintained in the condition of human livestock, if not as mere machines. The mitigations known to ancient slavery, as to the Mohammedan world, were refused them. The slave, according to an American jurist, existed only for the benefit and convenience of his owner.

On this infamous trade England flourished, her merchants grew rich, her colonies prospered. The commerce in African slaves was over and over again pronounced by men in authority to be of the utmost benefit to the country. Then, one day, the British people awoke to a sense of what was being done.

The cry was wrung from the nation, "This is infamous, this must stop." "You cannot stop it," replied the men of business; "this has been going on for centuries—we cannot do without slaves; the trade in them alone en-

riches millions. To stop it will mean the ruin of our colonies and our industries; it will benefit our deadliest rivals." "Even so," replied the shop-keeping nation, "it must stop." "This is madness," shrieked the affrighted dealers in human flesh. "This will cost you millions!" "How much?" carelessly asked John Bull, and, searching in his pockets, he flung twenty millions sterling on the counter. "Now let the slave go free!"

Surely, in the story of the nations, there is no finer gesture than that!

Other nations looked on, amused. Since the British were such fools, then men of sense might take up the trade. Blithely their traders sought the slave coasts. But the British, in their mulish way, objected to the traffic in human beings, and saw no reason why what they held to be wrong should be done under a foreign flag. In the teeth of a sullen opposition by nearly all the Powers, we stopped the slave trade. The British navy stopped it. "You must not trample on the independence of other nations," our judges warned us. "We claim respect for our flag, whomsoever it covers," shouted Washington. Palmerston listened courteously to these protests and passed them on—with a wink, one suspects—to our naval commanders. They were arrogant, high-handed men, those Victorians. Under whatever flag the slaver was sailing, he found it prudent to keep out of their way.

It is a singular chapter in our story, illustrating the curious dualism of the British character. Gloomy and grisly though most of it is, the champions of right against wrong, of the weak against the strong, will return from it refreshed and encouraged. The slave trade, when it was abolished by the exertions of Granville Sharp,

Clarkson, Wilberforce, and their immortal associates, had been carried on under the English flag since the days of Queen Elizabeth. In their own time, an English traveller spoke of the futility of efforts to abolish an institution which had endured from before the dawn of history. Every nation had held slaves; no religion had condemned slavery as wrong. Yet by persistent appeals to the conscience of mankind, without any great support from the churches, the evil thing was swept away, was utterly abolished. Very, very slowly, man's sympathy had broadened out beyond the limits of the family and the tribe till it reached as far as the limits of human kind. To-day our sympathies are reaching out beyond. . . . There are countless millions of living beings, hardly less sentient than the negro, whose wrongs call urgently for redress. The case of the black slave was once seemingly as hopeless as theirs.

EDMUND B. D'AUVERGNE.





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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE REVIVAL OF SLAVERY

THE discovery of America, by which the Old World was to benefit so little, was Africa's tragedy.

By the middle of the fifteenth century serfdom was fast decaying, and slavery as an institution had tended to become exotic in Western Europe. The sight of a black or brown slave in the train of some traveller returned from the semi-fabulous East was enough, north of the Alps, at any rate, to set the crowd agape. Further south, indeed, the sight was less rare. The Venetians had to be restrained from selling captives to the infidel, and were suspected of importing from the Levant, damsels for the entertainment of their magnificoes. Across the shrinking frontiers of the Moorish states in Spain, as through the ports which traded with the Barbary coasts, there continued a diminishing traffic in human livestock. While gold, the dully glowing ruby, rich silks, and the delicious spices of Cathay, were the most coveted wares, the merchant might still occasionally take a chance with a comely black, proper to gratify a rich man's love of pomp and add a smart exotic colour to his household. In this way, serving no economic purpose, a thin trickle of slaves into Europe was kept up; and it was a trickle steady enough to keep alive the idea, sanctioned by the

Hebrew writings and by the "Fathers," that slavery was not unlawful—that while it was a sin to take or "steal" a man's money or clothing, it was not a sin to take or "enslave" the man himself.

Within another hundred years, perhaps, that idea, which irked the more enlightened churchmen of the Renaissance, might have died out or remained buried in the tomes of Augustine and Aquinas. But the curse upon the descendants of Ham was to be fulfilled. In very different language, the supply of black labour came pat with the demand. The breeding ground of the human beast of burden was discovered a little while before the need for him became apparent.

That discovery was made by the Portuguese sailors, whom the Infante Dom Henry, surnamed the Navigator (the son, it may be worth remembering, of an English-woman), sent forth into the Atlantic to explore the coasts of Africa and find a way to auriferous Ind. As the result of a foray upon the shores of the Sahara, some Moors, that is to say, Moslem Arabs or Berbers, were taken by the mariners and presented to the prince as spoils of war. Probably his highness was at a loss what to do with them. Expecting to be reduced to slavery according to the customs of their own country, the captives offered, by way of ransom, to procure more serviceable slaves and to show the Christians where they could have as many as they wanted for the taking. Doubtless, the Navigator would have preferred to exchange his prisoners for gold dust, but the bargain was struck, the ships once more set sail, and, many weeks later, returned with ten black slaves, the property, we gather, of the ransomed Moors. Presumably these were disposed of to advantage, for a

company was immediately formed to deal in these as in other produce of the newly-explored coast. A year later (1444) there was landed at Lagos, in Algarve, a cargo of two hundred and fifty African slaves, such as had not been seen in Portugal since the departure of the Moors or, perhaps, of the Romans. The spectacle is described by Eannes de Azurara, himself an explorer, who, it is alleged, was specially charged to whitewash the Infante's transactions and to credit him with the most pious intentions.

"On the eighth day of August, 1444, very early in the morning on account of the heat, the mariners began to assemble their lighters and to disembark their captives, according to their orders. Which captives were gathered together in a field, and marvellous it was to see among them some of a rosy whiteness, fair and well made;<sup>1</sup> others less white, verging on grey; others again as black as moles, as various in their complexions as in their shapes. . . . And what heart was so hard as not to be moved to pity by the sight of this multitude, some with bowed heads and tearful countenances, others groaning dolorously and with eyes uplifted towards heaven, as if to implore help from the Father of all mankind; while there were others who covered their faces with their hands and flung themselves down upon the ground, and some again who gave vent to their sorrow in a dirge, after the manner of their country; and although we could not understand the words, well we appreciated the depth of their distress. And now, to aggravate their woe, men came to parcel them out into five distinct lots, to do which they tore

<sup>1</sup> Some were desert Moors or Berbers, and others natives of the recently-discovered Canary Islands.

the son from his father, the wife from the husband, the brother from his brethren. No tie of blood or comradeship was respected; each was thrown into a place by chance. O irresistible fortune, thou which ridest roughshod over the affairs of this world, bring to the knowledge of these most unhappy folk those ultimate truths from which they may receive consolation! And ye that are charged with this division into lots, deplore so great a misery, and observe how these unhappy ones embrace one another so tightly that it needs no little strength to tear them apart. Such a division indeed, was not to be effected without great trouble, since parents and children, finding themselves in different groups, would run back to each other—mothers clutched up their children and ran away with them, caring not about the blows they received so long as their little ones should not be torn from them. After this toilsome fashion was the task of division accomplished, the work being rendered more difficult by the crowds which flocked from the neighbouring towns and villages, neglecting their work, to see this novel sight. And some of these spectators moved to tears, others chattering, they made a tumult which hindered those charged with the business. The Infante (Dom Henry), mounted on a powerful horse, disdained to take his own share, some forty-six souls, but threw it back into the common stock, taking pleasure only in the thought of so many souls being redeemed from perdition. And truly, his hope was not vain, since so soon as they learned the language, with very little trouble, these people became Christians; and I who write this history saw afterwards in the town of Lagos, young men and women, the offspring of these, born in the country,

as good and genuine Christians as if they had been descended from the generation first baptised under the dispensation of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

Hunting people often say they hunt the fox and the deer in order to save these poor animals from being exterminated by the cruel farmers. Dom Henry’s motive for kidnapping black folk at the estuaries of the Senegal and Gambia may have been similarly unselfish. At the time of his death, in 1460, he must have reflected with pleasure on the harvest of souls he had gathered in; for by then the Portuguese were importing from six to seven hundred slaves annually. These were employed as domestic servants by wealthy families in the cities, and, it is said, in the cultivation of the regions evacuated by the Moors—but the Moors had been gone from Portugal two hundred years. A large number, probably a majority, of the slaves found their way into Spain, though there again, no hands could have been needed to replace the Moors till the year 1500 or thereabouts. Whatever real need Portugal had of these Africans, she was able to absorb them, as is to this day attested by the negroid types so common in the southern provinces. Once a negro was baptised, these Roman Catholics persisted in regarding him as a fellow man, not as a chattel, and would not refuse to inter-marry with him. For this reason, apart from the absence of any widespread economic demand, it is hard to believe that slavery could ever have taken deep root in the Iberian peninsula.

Nor even a hundred years later does the slave appear to have been wanted in our own country. By then all the world was aware of the Portuguese discoveries, and

<sup>1</sup> Eannes de Azurara, *Chronicle of Guinea*.



in Mary Tudor's reign, five ships were fitted out by a syndicate of London merchants to visit the shores of Guinea and find out what trade could be done there, despite the monopoly claimed by the King of Portugal. The captains, John Lok and Robert Gainsh, found there "a people called Moors, Moorens, or Negroes, a people of beastly living, without a God, laws, religion or common wealth, and so scorched and vexed with the heat of the sonne, that in many places they curse it when it riseth." Possibly, to give them an uplift, as Froude suggests, the adventurers carried off to London "certaine black slaves, whereof some were tall and strong men, and could wel agree with our meates and drinkes." But, upon the report of Master William Towerson of London, who visited the coast the next year, that the seizure of these men had embittered their countrymen against the English and indisposed them to trade, the kidnapped natives were restored to their country in 1557—a sure proof that they were not looked on as any great prize in London. "The people," says the Hakluyt chronicler, "were very glad of our negroes, specially one of their brother's wives, and one of their aunts, which received them with much joy, and so did all the rest of the people, as if they had been their naturall brethren." One would give much for some account of these black men's sojourn in Tudor London and a transcript of their impressions. Undoubtedly, they experienced kinder treatment than that extended to those of their race two centuries later.

As the Portuguese coasted further south and rounded the continent, they became acquainted in turn with a variety of tribes and small nations, speaking different

tongues and of different tempers. Slavery, in one form or another, was no new thing in Africa; but to the simpler natives, at all events, being carried away beyond the horizon by these strange white men, whom they, like the Caribs, perhaps believed to be born of the ocean foam, must have seemed a more awful fate than being dragged away by men more like themselves, the Arab slave raiders and warlike semi-Moorish tribes from the East. Till the last days of the trade, the suspicion lingered that the whites wanted them for food. At the sight of those white sails the war drum spread the alarm far inland. The timid fled to the bush, the bolder seized their bows and spears. In the course of their forays, the "Portugals" often met with so fierce a resistance that they ceased to venture inland and established themselves on the shore at forts or factories, of which Elmina on the Gold Coast was one, where they invited the natives to trade with them. At first the blacks bartered only their ne'er-do-wells and criminals. "When they sit in council in the consultation house, the king or captain sitteth in their midst and the elders upon the floor by him (for they give reverence to their elders), and the common sort sit round about them. There they sit to examine matters of theft, which if a man be taken with, to steal but a Portugal cloth from another, he is sold to the Portugal for a slave."<sup>1</sup> Thus the negroes, having in the course of a century become used to the white man, became accessories to the commerce in their own species. We shall see that the pretence that the slavers took only those wretched beings of whom their fellows had a right to dispose was maintained two hundred years after as a justification for the trade.

<sup>1</sup> Hakluyt's *Navigations*, Vol. X (1904 edition).

According to one authority,<sup>1</sup> the Portuguese presently made a practice of bartering the slaves they obtained in this and other ways for gold and ivory. Evidently it had become hardly worth while supplying slaves to Europe when, on October 12th, 1492, Columbus made his first landing on American soil.

It was unlucky for the aborigines of that Continent that the discovery was not delayed till Europe was fitted to approach it in a more humane and scientific spirit. A Spanish-American writer<sup>2</sup> speculates what might have happened to the New World if its resources had not been exploited by negro labour. Would the invaders, he asks, have forced the natives to work? If so, they would certainly have perished, as they actually did in those islands where for a while they shared the black man's bondage. Would the Spaniards have thrust them aside and resigned themselves to carving out their fortunes with their own hands in the sweat of their brow? Considering the martial and arrogant temper of the countrymen of Cortes, we must dismiss that as incredible. The adventurers would soon have returned home, tired out and disgusted, emigration from Spain would have ceased, the immense area occupied by Spain would have become depopulated, and in course of time would have come into the occupation of other nations. The indigenous peoples of South America would then have shared the melancholy fate of their fellow savages in the lands settled by the Anglo-Saxons. From that doom, they were saved by the negro slave.

As is well known, the first Spaniards in America did

<sup>1</sup> E. J. Payne, *Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. I, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Sacó, *Historia de la Esclavitud en el Nuevo Mundo*, tome 1.

not perceive the physical weakness of the naked barbarians whom they encountered on the Bahama Islands and Hispaniola. Columbus, in January 1494, sent Antonio Torres back to Spain with "some of the cannibals, men and women, boys and girls," who, he thought, when they had abandoned their inhumanity, would be better than any other slaves. He recommended that great care should be taken of them so that they might teach others. The imports which the new colonies needed might be paid in slaves from among the cannibals—a people very savage and suitable for the purpose.

The discoverer had made a false step. To the sovereigns by whom he was commissioned, Isabel and Ferdinand the Catholic, a present of slaves was by no means acceptable. Partly for this reason, Columbus soon felt the weight of their displeasure. No more "Indians" were sent to Europe as slaves. A worse fate befell them. They were forced to labour in their own country to satisfy the rapacity of men who, like all first comers in undeveloped lands, in their haste to make money, knew no ruth and no scruple. The Spanish monarchs, on the contrary, were at once sensible of their responsibility towards the extraordinary races and uncharted regions which had been brought beneath their sway. Isabel's first charge to Columbus was to employ himself in the conversion of the "cannibals." But hard upon the first reports of treasure found, came complaints as to the feebleness of the natives and a cry for more hands. Eyes were turned upon the black slaves, obtained originally through Portugal, now dispersed about the southern parts of Spain. Every ship that now by royal licence cleared from a Spanish port for the Indies, we may be

sure had its complement of negroes. Aware of this, and even now more solicitous for the salvation of the heathens than for the economic necessities of the newly-discovered lands, the sovereign decreed on September 3rd, 1501, that only Christian negroes, born in Spain, might be landed in the Indies, the immigration of Jews and Moors being forbidden as likely to hinder the propagation of the faith.

For two decades, while the Spanish adventurers, defying the orders of their king, robbed, enslaved and massacred the American natives, the increasing demand for negro labour was ostensibly, at least, supplied from the comparatively small reservoir of slaves existing in the home country. Very early in the day, this must have been replenished from over the border and a fillip given to the activities of the Portuguese on the Gold Coast. Whether from kindness of heart or a sense of the value of livestock, King Ferdinand, writing to one of his lieutenants in 1511, expressed surprise at the mortality among the negroes employed in the mines of Hispaniola, and said they were to be taken better care of. Careless of the royal injunctions, the Spanish colonists would probably have preferred to work the natives—they were cheaper and less formidable. They complained in 1514 that the number of blacks introduced into the island of Hispaniola threatened danger. Their fear was justified—a serious insurrection occurred in 1522. It was the Dominican and Hieronymite clergy, about this time, who first proposed that negroes should be sent out direct from Guinea, “the work of one negro being worth that of four Indians.” Possibly there was a humane motive behind this proposal—there can be no doubt that such

inspired the campaign of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, who went home in 1517 to protest against the oppression of the natives by his countrymen, and to plead their cause with the new king Charles. He was listened to sympathetically. Laws for the protection of the aborigines were drafted, laws which were, at any rate, so far obeyed that the South American Indian has remained unenslaved, and still inhabits the country of his origin. But if the native was not to work, who was to extract the riches of the soil? The aged Cardinal Ximenez would not countenance the transfer of the yoke from brown shoulders to black. His answer was, "There must be some other way." The king and his counsellors could find no other. A plan to exile Spanish women delinquents to America and so increase the white working population was attempted without much success. At this stage, Las Casas, it is maintained by Sacó, contemplated only the more extended employment of the Spanish negroes. The good friar's mentality appears to have been that of the medicoscientist who thinks it justifiable to relieve the sufferings of one creature by inflicting pain on another as innocent or more innocent. Sufficient blacks could not be furnished from the mother country—they must be procured from Africa—so the Indians' advocate was told. That he acquiesced in a traffic, which he afterwards admitted to be immoral, is certain; in 1531, we find him urging that licences to import negroes should be granted to anyone who wanted them. By that time the trade was in the hands of contractors. Charles had granted a patent or monopoly to a Flemish courtier called Garrevod, to import four thousand slaves into the West Indies from Guinea. The slaves were to be in pairs, like the animals

in the Ark, and were to be baptised and instructed in the faith immediately upon disembarkation. Later on, the licence was transferred to two Germans or Netherlanders named Eynger and Sayller. This does not mean that the contractors themselves became slave-snatchers. The Portuguese claim to a monopoly of the Guinea trade was respected, and the contract was farmed out to Genoese merchants resident in Spain, and through them to the actual dealers. Near his death-bed, Charles repented of his surrender to the forces of evil, and wished to prohibit the trade. It was too late. The slave ships were crossing now between Africa and America. The horrors of the Middle Passage had begun.

The Portuguese had cause to rub their hands with glee. They stood to profit not much less than their neighbours by the discoveries to the westward. Guinea after all might yield richer treasure than long-sought Cathay. On the isle of Sao Thomé, since again notorious, a great slave entrepôt or barracoon was established. Meanwhile, in their new land of bondage, the black folk multiplied. By 1534 there were upwards of a thousand negroes in Cuba; seven years later they counted a hundred thousand in the West Indies and thirty thousand in Hispaniola alone. But thousands of able-bodied whites followed in the tracks of Cortes, Balboa and Pizarro, taking their slaves with them, while the cultivation of the sugar cane, first planted by Columbus, created an insatiable demand for labour in the islands. Bitterly the planters complained that they were being ruined by the high price of slaves, which, at the maximum, was fixed at 100 ducats. Yet the Portuguese monopoly went for half a century unchallenged. Doubts as to the lawfulness

of the traffic lurked in the Spaniard's mind. He preferred to leave the catching of his prey to others. The French, who, landing on the western shores of Africa in the fourteenth century, might have forestalled all other nations in the trade, continued to show a similar disinclination. No thought of supplying the American market seems to have been behind the ventures of Lok and Towerson in Mary Tudor's day; and though Elizabeth reversed her sister's injunction against poaching on Portugal's preserve, it was not till the fourth year of her reign that Englishmen began to soil their hands by taking part in the unholy commerce.

In the years 1530 and 1532, William Hawkins, a Plymouth man, well liked by King Henry, made two voyages to West Africa and Brazil. In 1562 his son, John, a shrewd, unscrupulous man of business, persuasive in speech and manner, whose hopes of being taken into the service of the King of Spain were disappointed,<sup>1</sup> had already made several voyages to the Canary Islands where English traders were established; "and there (so the Hakluyt chronicler tells us), by his good and upright dealing being grown in love and favour with the people, informed himself among them by diligent inquisition of the state of the West India, whereof he had received some knowledge by the instructions of his father, but increased the same by the advertisements and reports of the people. And being assured, among other things, that the negroes were very good merchandise in Hispaniola, and that store of negroes might very easily be had upon the coast of Guinea, resolved with himself to

<sup>1</sup> For a revelation of Hawkins's personality and original designs see Mr. James A. Williamson's authoritative work, *Sir John Hawkins* (1927).



make triall thereof, and communicated that devise with his worshipfull friends of London; namely, with Sir Lionell Duckett, Sir Thomas Lodge, M(r.) Gunson, his father-in-law, Sir William Winter, M. Bromfield and others. All which persons liked so well of his intention that they became liberall contributors and adventurers in the action. For which purpose there were three good ships immediatly provided: the one called the *Salomon* of the burthen of 120 tunnes, whereon went M. Hawkins himself as generall; the second, the *Swallow* of 100 tunnes, whereon went for Captaine M. Thomas Hampton; and the third, the *Jesus*, a barke of 40 tunnes, whereon the Master supplied the Captaine's room; in which small fleet M. Hawkins took with him not above 100 men for fear of sicknesse and other inconveniences whereunto men on long voyages are commonly subject."

By a comparison with Spanish and Portuguese records, Mr. James A. Williamson has been able to correct and supplement the narrative probably dictated by John Hawkins to the Hakluyt editor. Sailing from Plymouth in October, 1562, he called at Teneriffe where he was entertained by a Spanish merchant in touch with the West Indian planters. Anxious to humour King Philip, he took on board a Spanish pilot, and passed over to Sierra Leone, "which place by the people of the country is called Tagarin. Here he stayed some time and got into his possession, partly by the sworde and partly by other meanes, to the number of 300 Negros at least, besides other merchandise which that country yieldeth." He selected this stretch of coast so as to take the natives by surprise and to avoid spoiling the English trade elsewhere in other commodities. The Portuguese, however,

were there before him, and the slaves he took "partly by the sword" were obtained from them by the persuasive power of his guns. Adding, as it seems, one of their ships to his fleet, he sailed across the ocean to Isabella, in the island of Hispaniola. No doubt he was expected by the planters, and they, pretending to act under duress, were glad enough to buy his blacks, presumably at less than the officially established rates. The understanding between them and the Englishman, whom they afterwards denounced to their king as a pirate, was sufficiently good to allow him to leave behind a hundred slaves unsold. From Isabella he proceeded to the little ports of Puerto de la Plata and Monte Cristi, where he made like sales, and having invested the proceeds in gold, silver, hides, pearls and sugar, he returned home in August 1563 "with much gaine to himself and the aforesaid adventurers."

Hawkins made two more slaving voyages to Guinea, and thence to the Spanish Main in 1564 and 1567. Between these must be interposed the expedition of John Lovell, who sailed in 1566. Queen Elizabeth became a partner in Hawkins's enterprise, and pocketed a share in his profits. It is alleged that she embarked in the venture only upon the seaman's positive assurance that no force or constraint would be used to make slaves of the blacks. Her Grace was not fool enough to have believed that if she had been told so, but it was, of course, her practice to shift the guilt of all her nefarious deeds on to the shoulders of a subordinate. Hawkins having been granted a coat of arms, adopted for his crest "a demi-Moor proper bound in a cord"; and, so far from blushing for his methods, his shipmates relate how they stayed

certain days upon an island, "going every day on shore to take the inhabitants, with burning and spoiling their towns. . . ." On another occasion their "generall" sent boats ashore eight leagues to the north of Cape Roxo, where, with margaritas and other wares which the negroes esteemed, they enticed the negroes to come to them and to fetch water, thinking to set upon them and take them. Happily, the natives took fright and ran away. Often they turned on the white scoundrels and killed many with poisoned arrows. In the course of their second expedition the English were chased back to their boats and secured only ten slaves at a cost of seven of their own men. Had the blacks combined against the strangers the traffic might have ended as soon as it began. But no racial or national spirit animated the Africans, and they valued the white as an ally as much as they feared him as a foe. In 1567 Hawkins was appealed to for aid by two native princes in their war against two other potentates, all the prisoners taken to be his reward. A brisk little campaign ensued. The English stormed and took a barricade with a loss of nine killed and many wounded. Though he charges his allies with keeping back many prisoners that were his due (for, says the chronicler, "in the negro is seldom or never found truth"), he left the coast with a haul of four or five hundred slaves.

The third slaving voyage finished in the bloodstained roads of San Juan de Ulua. By the Spanish guns the wrongs of the negroes were, for once, amply avenged. Out of the *Minion's* crew of pirates and man-catchers, only fifteen returned to England to tell their tale of disaster and to enkindle hatred in England against the

Spaniard. These latter voyages of John Hawkins acquired an historical and political importance, apart from their relation to the slave trade itself. The Spanish and the Portuguese governments would not admit the English to a share in their trade, though their subjects were ready enough to connive at it. Open war soon resulted, and the lesson taught Hawkins at Ulua was sufficient to discourage his countrymen for many years from attempting to force their ill-gotten human stock upon the South American market.

Having witnessed an orgy of cannibalism indulged in by their savage allies to celebrate their victory, the pirates, remarks a modern writer, came to look on slave raiding as nothing but a hunting of wild beasts. On this it may be observed that our countrymen embarked in the trade without any knowledge of the character or customs of their quarry, and that, like other wolves, they would certainly have had no scruple about preying on lambs; also, the actual cruelties committed by the blacks were no worse than those inflicted on them, as we shall see, by British magistrates two hundred years after. It is noteworthy that no concern for the conversion of the heathens was even affected by Hawkins and his ruffians, although their accounts are greasy with Puritan self-righteousness. To "the Almighty God who never suffereth his elect to perish" thanks is given for a favouring breeze; for their deliverance from an ambushade the desperadoes praise God "who worketh all things for the best and would not have it so." This inhuman attitude differs notably from the tone of the earlier navigators in the reign of Catholic Mary. Lest it be attributed to the change in religion or to overmuch study of the Hebrew

scriptures, it may also be contrasted with the stand taken sixty years later, in James I's reign, by Master Richard Jobson, an agent of the African Company, who refused to buy some handsome black wenches from a native chief on the ground that his countrymen did not deal in such commodities, neither did they buy or sell one another or any that had their own shape.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Golden Trade*. Richard Jobson, London, 1624.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

THEY had ceased to do so, it may be suspected, because the market in human flesh appeared at that moment to be closed to England. The Netherlands were in revolt against Spain, and when, in 1580, Portugal passed to the Spanish crown, the colonies of both kingdoms were harried impartially by the Dutch seamen and ransacked for treasure. What slaves we required we bought from the Hollanders, and we got some, also, Sir Harry Johnston thinks, from Morocco, although organised efforts to trade with that country made in the reign of Queen Elizabeth had little result. If it was the high prices maintained under the Spanish monopoly which tempted us originally to embark in the slave trade, it was the rapid expansion of our own empire in the first half of the seventeenth century which brought us back into it. The twenty-two negroes included in a return of the population of Virginia made in 1624 had been landed from a Dutch ship four years previously.<sup>1</sup> The negroes taken out to Barbados by the first settlers were seized on a Portuguese ship. But the supply was not left long in the hands of foreigners. In 1631, upon the expiry of the charter granted by James I to Jobson's more scrupulous employers, a second African company was formed in London by

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Colonial Series.*

Sir Richard Young, Sir Kenelm Digby and others, the letters patent conceding to it the exclusive right to trade with the whole west coast of Africa for gold, ivory, slaves and other produce. The English slave trade had recommenced, to continue and to flourish exceedingly for close on two hundred years.

Virginia, New England and the Bermudas were settled. In 1627 the Earl of Carlisle received a grant of all the Caribbee Islands. Old Providence, an island off the Mosquito coast, was for long the theatre of an abortive attempt at colonization by an English syndicate. When the century was half gone, the rich island of Jamaica was wrested by Cromwell's admirals from Spain. There remained in the Antilles few natives to exploit, but this second race of invaders yielded nothing in ruthlessness and rapacity to the former. Gold and silver there might not be, but fortunes might be made out of sugar and tobacco. No care for the salvation of the savages troubled these later pioneers any more than John Hawkins. They—both the actual settler and the great absentee proprietor—were out to make money and to make it fast. The government at home let them go their own way with little interference. Efforts were made in London from time to time to people the plantations with voluntary emigrants, or with transported felons. The story of the white slave in our American colonies is an even sadder and more shameful one than that which we have to tell here. But the pale wretches spewed out of English gaols, or "spirited" by the crimps away from the London slums, could not work hard enough or fast enough for their greedy taskmasters. The capitalists of the West Indies did not want a white proletariat.

English, Dutch and Danes had come to realise, like the Spaniards before them, that the wealth of the new Indies could be most cheaply and quickly extracted by African labour. A black slave could do the work of three white men, and could earn his prime cost in eighteen months. We catch a whisper, indeed, of the old English repugnance to slavery in a rebuke administered by the Company of Old Providence in the year 1634, to their agent, Mr. Rishworth, for his acting upon a groundless opinion that Christians might not lawfully keep negroes in a state of servitude during their "strangeness from Christianity," and the same company, four years later, thought there was danger from the number of blacks on the island, and proposed to send out two hundred English (presumably convicts) to be exchanged for as many negroes. To two Englishmen in a family, one negro might be received, for whom forty pounds of tobacco per head might be paid. But these apprehensions and scruples fast disappeared, and the cry was ever for more negroes. In a letter from the Antilles dated 1677, the negro is described as the strength and sinews of the western world.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, Englishmen had travelled a long way from Richard Jobson's point of view. Even on English soil, the slave was now officially recognised as property. During the Interregnum, Penniston, a merchant of the Bermudas, complained that upon his coming to England, seven of his negroes had taken the opportunity to escape, and were now near Plymouth; whereupon the Council of State ordered the fugitives to be apprehended and kept in custody till the complainant should arrange for their



safe conduct to London and delivery to the Bermuda Company.<sup>1</sup>

Upon the Restoration, the highest personages in the realm hastened to engage in this legitimate and profitable commerce. The second company's charter having run out, a third syndicate was formed in 1663, under the style of the Royal African Company, the letters patent being granted to Her Majesty Queen Katharine, the Queen Mother, the Duke of York, the Duchess of Orleans, Prince Rupert, George, Duke of Buckingham, and sixty-three others, for the furtherance of trade and encouragement in the discovery of gold mines and settling of plantations; His Majesty, his heirs and successors to have two-thirds of all gold mined in the places aforesaid. The Company built forts and factories, Cape Coast Castle among others, on what came to be called the Gold Coast, and undertook to supply the plantations with three thousand slaves annually. Portugal had by now broken away from Spain, and the Spaniards, refusing to do their own man-catching, preferred to buy their slaves from us.

"Since my last," wrote a settler in Barbados in 1662, "a Spanish ship has arrived and filled our island with money, 125 to 140 pieces of eight per head being given by them for negroes." The Spaniards bought four hundred slaves and purposed to buy another four hundred, for shipment to the mines in Peru, where the market price for a negro was a thousand pieces of eight. Notwithstanding, the third African company did not prosper. War had broken out with the Dutch, who attacked their forts and carried off their slaves, as John Hawkins a hundred years before had attacked and spoiled the Portuguese. Their monopoly

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Colonial*, Sept. 10th, 1659.

was perpetually infringed by traders of all nations. The planters of Barbados clamoured for free trade in slaves. The Company, in a wittily-worded reply, defended their privilege. No doubt it was good to buy cheap and sell dear—still better, to get everything for nothing at all; if all His Majesty's dominions were made only for Barbados, free trade might indeed be expedient; they never asked more than £17 for a negro and wished the planters would pay what they owed. But in Barbados, "they had so great glut of negroes that they would hardly give them victuals for their labour, and multitudes died upon the Company's hands" (1668). Despite these setbacks, when the Company was re-constituted in 1672<sup>1</sup> a capital of £111,000 was raised in nine months, and King Charles II paid five thousand pounds for his share as an "adventurer." The new corporation set to work briskly under the able directorship of the Duke of York, repaired Cape Coast Castle, and, in the course of one year, imported gold which, coined in London, produced fifty thousand guineas. Slaves were sent to all His Majesty's plantations "which could not subsist without them." Such numbers were exported that the price dropped. On December 10th, 1672, by proclamation of the Duke of York, negroes between the ages of twelve and forty were to be sold at Barbados for £15, at the Leeward Isles for £16, at Jamaica for £17, and at the Virgin Isles for £18.

Having secured the great prize of the trade, the contract to supply the Spanish colonies, the company transformed itself into the Asiento Company, and maintained a great

<sup>1</sup> The African Company underwent more reorganisations and transformations than it is worth while to record here. See *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol. I, chs. 7, 11, 15.

establishment at Kingston, Jamaica, for the conduct of its business in the West Indies. This horrible monopoly was confirmed to England in 1713 by the Treaty of Utrecht, which authorised British subjects to import 144,000 slaves in the course of thirty years, at the rate of 4,800 per annum, and to send one ship filled with merchandise every year to the towns of Vera Cruz and Portobello. In the meantime, however, the Company had been shorn of its exclusive privileges by the Bill of Rights, which secured Englishmen liberty and the right to enslave other people. Nowhere was this blow to the Company a matter of greater rejoicing than at Bristol. The merchants of that ancient city had already done a thriving trade with America in the more innocent commodities, and their fingers itched to grasp the more readily saleable negroes. Goods manufactured in the West Country or imported for the purpose from France and Holland, were shipped out to Guinea and exchanged for slaves; these were sold in the Indies and the ships re-entered the Avon loaded with tropical produce. Bristol waxed fat on black flesh. The masters of her Guineamen swaggered about in richly-laced coats and cocked hats, they wore buttons and buckles of gold or silver, and were attended always by a slave in livery. In 1709, fifty-seven Bristol ships were engaged in the trade, while the number of slavers leaving the Thames fell from 104 in the first year of the eighteenth century to 30 in 1704. The African Company was ruined by the competition of the western port, and was only saved from bankruptcy by an annual subsidy. For a long time it was allowed to exact a duty from its rivals for the upkeep of its forts. In 1730 this remaining privilege was

swept away, and the trade was placed under the control of a board composed of three representatives from each of the three ports most concerned in the trade—London, Bristol and Liverpool.

The town on the Mersey was not altogether a new-comer to the slave trade; now, finding its illicit commerce in other wares with the Spanish dominions in danger of suppression, its shippers set to work to snatch the more profitable trade from its southern rival. "Immediately on the adoption of the new regulations, fifteen vessels of the average burthen of seventy-five tons each were despatched from Liverpool to the coast of Africa. The number of slaves annually imported in the infancy of the trade cannot now be ascertained, but the encouragement must have been very great to increase the number of vessels more than double in seven years, thirty-three Guineamen having cleared for the coast in the year 1737." Liverpool, as the out-port of a growing manufacturing district, was soon able to undercut Bristol by twelve per cent. Another reason is assigned for her success in a history published by an anonymous writer in the year 1795:<sup>1</sup> "The London and Bristol merchants not only allowed ample monthly pay to the captains, but cabin privileges, primage and daily port charges; they also allowed the factors five per cent on the sales and five per cent on the returns, and the vessels were always fully manned by seamen at a monthly rate. The Liverpool merchants proceeded on a more economical plan, the generality of the captains were at annual salaries, no cabin privileges were permitted, primage was unknown, and as to port

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Mr. Gomer Williams in his authoritative work, *The Liverpool Privateers* (1897), to which, as to Mr. Latimer's *Annals of Bristol* (1893), I am greatly indebted.

allowances, not a single shilling was given, while five shillings a day was the usual pay from Bristol and seven-and-six a day from London. The captains from those ports could therefore occasionally eat on shore and drink their bottle of Madeira; whereas the poor Liverpool skipper was obliged to repair on board to eat his piece of salt beef and biscuit, and bowl of new rum punch sweetened with brown sugar. The factors, instead of a rate per centum, had an annual salary, and were allowed the rent of their store, negro hire and incidental charges; the portage was still more economical: their method was to take poor boys apprentice for a long term, who were annually increased, became good seamen, were then mates, then captains and, afterwards, factors on the islands. Few men at monthly pay were required to navigate a Liverpool vessel." By the middle of the eighteenth century, eighty-seven ships left the Mersey every year on their kidnapping expeditions, and Liverpool had won the sad distinction of being the greatest slaving port in the Old World. A drunken actor being hissed on the boards of a Liverpool theatre turned on the audience and told them that he refused to be insulted by a gang of ruffians, in whose infernal city every brick was cemented with an African's blood.

By the treaty of El Retiro (1750), Britain relinquished, for a substantial consideration, her prerogative of finding the Spaniards in slaves. The eagle does not catch flies, but for over half a century the British lion was ready and willing to do another nation's man-catching. During that period, grumbles Bryan Edwards, himself a Jamaica planter, we had furnished our rivals and enemies with half a million negroes. Though the French, the Dutch, the

Danes and the Portuguese were ready to take our place as purveyors to the Spanish-American market, our traders continued to do very good business, owing to the growth of the sugar industry in the West Indies, the annexation of several French islands, the cultivation of tobacco in Virginia and of rice in the Carolinas. Between 1780 and 1786, no fewer than 2,130,000 slaves were imported into the British American colonies, the average annual import amounting to 74,000, contributed as follows: by British ships, 38,000; by French, 20,000; by Portuguese, 10,000; by Dutch, 4,000; by Danish, 2,000. In certain years, the total rose to a hundred thousand. The trade reached its zenith in the years immediately prior to the American War of Independence. For 1771 the figures for the English trade are :

Ships sailing from:

Liverpool,	107;	total cargoes,	29,250 slaves.
London,	58	„ „	8,136 „
Bristol,	23	„ „	8,810 „
Lancaster,	4	„ „	950 „
Total,	192	„ „	47,146 „

Of these ships,

40	picked up	3,310	slaves on the coast of Senegambia.
56	„ „	11,960	„ „ „ Windward Coast.
29	„ „	7,525	„ „ „ Gold Coast.
63	„ „	23,301	„ in „ Bight of Benin.
4	„ „	1,050	„ on „ coast of Angola.

In five years, the number of slaves imported by British ships to the West Indies amounted to 116,539, as shown below:

## HUMAN LIVESTOCK

	Ships	Imported	Re-exported
1783	38	16,208 Negroes	809 Negroes
1784	93	28,550 „	5,263 „
1785	73	21,598 „	5,018 „
1786	67	19,160 „	4,317 „
1787	85	21,023 „	5,366 „

In Barbados, in 1773, five thousand whites “managed” seventy thousand blacks. In Jamaica, the white population rose from 8,500 to 26,000, and the black from 9,500 to 140,000 between the years 1673 and 1764. Thanks mainly to this wholesale plundering of a continent and in a very much less degree to natural increase, the British West Indies became a black man’s country.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SLAVE CATCHING

IN terms of the dismal science, the planter was the consumer of the slave, the slaver was the middle man, and the African himself the producer. The bricks of Liverpool and Bristol may indeed have been cemented with the negro's blood and the fields of America fertilised with his sweat, but it was the black man, like the sons of Jacob, who sold his brother to the stranger.

We have seen how the breeding grounds of the negro were first pointed out to Dom Henry's captains by the Moors of Barbary. Under what conditions the traffic in slaves was carried on by the Arabs before the advent of the European on the coast, we can only guess. Probably, there was little trade about it. The Moslem dealer swept down like a wolf on the fold and seized what negroes he required by force. Near our own time, an old negro told Mungo Park that on entering an inn at Timbuktu, he was shown a mat and a rope by the landlord who spoke thus: "If you are a true believer, sit and take refreshment; if you are an infidel, with this rope I will take you to the market and sell you." The Moors and the black Mohammedans of the Western Sudan early showed themselves as ready to sell their captives to the white people on the coast, as to their co-religionists on the other side of the



desert. But the heathen negroes themselves were not slow to perceive the value of their own flesh and blood. It was not necessary for the Christian to take his slaves by the sword, as John Hawkins did, or to burn their villages to get at them. The chiefs and heads of communities showed themselves increasingly eager to sell their own people—at a price. Instead of hunting their human prey, the white traders sailed leisurely along the coast till they observed a column of smoke which signified that the natives wished to do business; presently, they built their castles and factories, studding the seaboard from the Senegal to the Bight of Benin, where under the muzzles of their guns they could barter their cloths and rum and muskets for black folk. Hitherto, the captives of the bow and spear had been sacrificed by the victorious chiefs to the tribal god or else adopted as domestic slaves into the community; hitherto, the man who stole his neighbour's wife or anything that was his had been suffered to compound for his offence by a fine. Now it was seen that living men had a price which dead men had not, and that it was more profitable to sell the thief than to punish him with stripes or a fine.

“Since the slave trade has been introduced,” wrote Francis Moore, a factor of the African Company in the year 1731, “all punishments are commuted into this, and they strain hard for crimes in order to have the benefit of selling the criminal.” The king of the Akwamus hit on the ingenious plan of marrying women in every town and village and then turning them loose, trusting to the frailty of their race to get them into trouble; when this happened, he promptly demanded heavy damages from the “adulterer,” who, if he was not able to pay them, was

sold into slavery, together with his nearest relatives. Protecting his honour by this means, his majesty became the richest and most powerful sovereign on the Gold Coast. He disposed of two or three hundred slaves a month, and spent the worth of a thousand slaves in one year on rum. Not only murder, theft and adultery, but every trifling offence came to be punished in the same manner.<sup>1</sup> "In Kantor (the country south of the Gambia), a man seeing a tiger eating a deer which he had killed and hung up near his house, fired at the beast and killed a man; the king, for this accident, not only condemned him, his mother, three brothers and three sisters to be sold, but took himself the goods they were sold for. A man was brought to be sold to the author at Tamami for having stolen a tobacco pipe. But Moore sent for the Alkade and persuaded the person injured to take a compensation and leave the man free. They seldom sell their family slaves except for great crimes. The slaves sold in the river (Gambia), exclusive of those brought down by the merchants, may amount in a year to about a thousand, more or less, according to the wars on the river." In March 1731, we read, the king of Barsalli came to Joar, bringing with him a good number of his own subjects to sell for slaves. The Akras, in the course of a war, finding themselves short of ammunition, got it from a European schooner by leaving their children in pawn with the captain.

The favourite argument of the pro-slavers that the trade was the cause of many lives being spared, must therefore be received with serious qualifications. Strong tribes were on the contrary encouraged to attack the weak and the Arab slavers found a new market. "The

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Gold Coast*. Rev. C. C. Reindorf (a native author), Basle, 1895.

same merchants," says Moore, "bring down in some years slaves to the amount of two thousand, most of which they say are taken prisoners in war. These they buy from the different princes who take them. Their way of bringing them is tying them by the neck with leathern thongs, at about a yard distance from each other, thirty or forty on a string, having generally a bundle of corn or an elephant's tooth (tusk) upon each of their heads. On their way from the mountains they journey through great woods where there is no water to be found, they carry it with them in skin bags."

Moore, living on the coast at James Fort, knew not and perhaps could not have imagined the horrors of these journeys through the African bush. Mungo Park, on his return from discovering the upper course of the Niger, came back to the coast with one of these Kafilahs or coffles, as they came to be called. The treatment of the slaves by the Moslem dealers was, he considers, far from harsh or cruel. They were told to dance and to amuse themselves with games of hazard, to rouse them from their customary dejection—a dejection deepened by the universal belief that they were being taken down to the sea to be sold to the white man for food. For the most part, one is not surprised to hear, despite these efforts to cheer them up, they would sit all day in a sullen melancholy, their eyes fixed upon the ground. The kindness of the slave-traders, however, permitted of the slaves being kept fettered to each other all day by the ankles. "Those who seemed discontented were thus secured: a billet of wood is cut three feet long and a smooth notch being made upon one side of it, the ankle of the slave is bolted to the smooth part by means of a strong iron staple, one

prong of which passes on each side of the ankle." Park, glad to be going home and friendly with the leader of the caravan, did not allow himself to be too sensibly affected by the suffering of which he was a spectator. He noticed that those men, who had been kept in irons for several years, experienced great pain in starting to walk. A girl, failing to keep up the pace, was whipped again and again; she fell exhausted and vomited, when it was found she had been eating clay. (This is a habit among certain negroes, attributed by some experts to the presence of hook-worms in the system.) For some miles she was dragged along, then thrown across the back of an ass. She slipped off and the cry was raised, "Cut her throat." This was not done, possibly on account of the presence of a white man and of a Mohammedan schoolmaster. Finally, the girl was cut out of the coflee and left beside the track to die or be devoured by the wild beasts. Our traveller relates one or two more episodes of the same kind. He admits he was moved by the distress of a girl on being sold to the trader and ordered to join the coflee by her master at a village passed *en route*.

The natives of the coast who were sold by their own kinsfolk, at least escaped the agonies of these journeys. In times of famine, they would sell themselves. In 1681, says Barbot, a French factor, he could have bought a great number at very easy rates at Goree, if he could only have found provisions to subsist them. In the year following, the best slaves could be purchased for eight francs and were resold for above a hundred crowns. "You could often have a substantial slave for three or four quarts of brandy."

The Yalufs, a tribe inhabiting the right bank of the

Gambia, are said by the French traders to have been ready to sell their own children (like the white planters in after years), kindred and neighbours. "To compass it, they desire the person they intend to sell, to help them in carrying something up to the factory by way of trade; and when there, the person so deluded, not understanding the language, is sold and delivered up as a slave, notwithstanding his resistance and exclaiming against the treachery. A father had formed a design of selling his son, who suspecting his intention when they came to the factory, went aside to the store house and fairly sold his father. When the old man saw they were about to fetter him, he cried out he was his father; but the son denying it, the bargain held good. The son met his desert, for returning with his merchandise, he met a negro chief who stripped him of his ill-gotten wealth and sold him at the same market."

On other parts of the coast, however, the father who sold his son was branded as infamous. Bryan Edwards was told of one such unnatural parent who died under the weight of public opprobrium. Another man, on being convicted of adultery, sold his young brother (who became a slave of Edwards) to pay his fine. The black who thirsted for a dram of rum or coveted a new loin-cloth had no scruple about stealing other people's children. Little negroes of both sexes were kidnapped freely when they were found abroad alone and when scaring birds away from the millet fields. Adam, a Congo boy, remembered to have come from a vast distance inland. He was waylaid and stolen by one of his own countrymen about three miles from his own village. It was early in the morning, and the man hid him all day in

the bush and marched him by night. At the end of a month, he was sold to another native for a gun, then changed hands several times and at last found himself in a coffle of twenty boys which was sold to a shipmaster. Oliver, another boy belonging to Bryan Edwards, was carried off by a party of Fantis who attacked his home by night. The slave, Esther, when a girl, was visiting her grandmother at a village which likewise was attacked by night; she and the other women took refuge in the bush, but were found by the attackers. Her grandmother and other women unable or unwilling to walk were butchered; she was taken to the coast and sold.

Captain William Snelgrave, writing in 1734, admits the slaves called him a great rascal for taking them; but, giving evidence before parliamentary commissions towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Guinea-masters mostly protested that they bought only persons enslaved by the laws of their country or whom the vendors had a right to sell. One witness, however, candidly admitted he did not trouble himself at all about the guilt or status of anybody sold to him or the right of one black to sell another. "Any captain," he said, "would be considered a fool by every trading man for asking such a question."<sup>1</sup>

Very often and especially as the traders waxed more numerous and powerful, the distinctions between free men and slaves made by the natives themselves were ignored. All was fish that came into the slave-trader's net, especially if it happened to be the particular captain's last trip to the Coast, and he had no more to fear from the natives' resentment. It is gratifying to learn that the

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 89, 1790.

slave-dealer was sometimes taken as well as the enslaved. A black merchant who had sold a little girl to an English skipper, was pounced upon by the child's parents and brought out handcuffed in a canoe to be offered to the same trader. "What, captain," he protested, piteously, "you no buy me, grand trading man, Ben Johnson, from Wappoh?" But the skipper did buy Mr. Johnson, who was hauled up on deck and thrown down among the slaves below, many of whom were there by his agency. It is not stated that the skipper restored the little girl to her parents. Mistakes on the part of traders were often savagely avenged. Moore says that Captain Major was killed by the natives for having refused to release a slave left with him as a pawn or hostage. Occasionally a schooner would be boarded, the crew massacred and the vessel burned or set adrift. A charge against which the Guinea-masters were at pains to defend themselves at the bar of public opinion was that they refused to surrender "pawns" when ransom was tendered. When the pawn had indisputably been carried off, the plea generally was that the master (or captain, as he preferred to call himself) had been compelled to take advantage of a favourable wind. Ironically enough, these professional traffickers in human flesh resented the description of kidnappers. In 1788, shortly after the arrival at Dominica of the *Molly*, of Liverpool, with a cargo of slaves, a free black named Quao came ashore from the ship *Gainsborough* and accused the skipper of the *Molly* of having aboard a number of pawns, as hostages for whom a number of white seamen were held at the Cameroons. The black emissary identified twenty-two of the pawns and took them back to Africa, where, if we are to believe the slavers' own

report, they were received with indifference by their countrymen and presently went back to the West Indies to earn a living as free labourers.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Snelgrave tells the story of Tom, one of the king of Dahomey's "gentlemen," who was deputed by his majesty to accompany a trader named Lambe to Europe on a business mission. But Lambe sailed over to Maryland and unhesitatingly sold the negro to a planter. Later on, hearing that Tom was being enquired after by his sovereign, he redeemed him and took him to London. Arriving in the year 1731, Tom was made much of and introduced into society. After many months, at the instance of the Dukes of Richmond and Montagu, a passage back to Africa was found for him aboard H.M.S. *Tiger*, and Tom was happily restored to the court circles of Dahomey, to spread abroad the reputation of the English nation for justice and hospitality.

Snelgrave scoffed at the sensation he created and denied that he was a diplomatic envoy from the court of Abomey to the court of St. James's as some people had represented. "Several plays," he disgustedly remarks, "were acted on his account and it was advertised that they were for the benefit of Prince Adamoo Oronoko Tom-o, these jingling names being invented to carry on the fraud better."

The black courtier's experience was similar to that of Job ben Solomon, the son of a Moorish chief, who, when on his way to James Fort to negotiate a sale of slaves, was seized by the Mandingo and presently found himself on the slave deck of a vessel bound for Maryland. There he was sold. Unable to explain himself, he was observed

<sup>1</sup> Evidence given before Parliamentary Commission, 1790.



by his owner or one of his owner's friends to be writing in Arabic character. He was now allowed to go into a field to accomplish his devotions according to the Muslim rite, but was subjected to great annoyance by the white children. At length a Yaluf negro slave was found who could act as his interpreter and his identity and quality having been established, a fund was raised for his redemption and he was sent over to London. His romantic story was noised abroad. He was presented to George II, visited the nobility at their country houses, and in course of time returned to his native desert. His wife, deeming him dead, had taken another husband, for which he forgave her. He had learnt English during the long period of his expatriation and liked to discourse with Englishmen on the singular providence displayed on his behalf—most presumptuously, exclaims a contemporary chronicler, seeing that he was enslaved while actually about the business of enslaving others.

A better known case is that of a free black named Amissa. In 1774 he was hired aboard a slaver as a deck hand and received part of his wages. Going ashore at Kingston, Jamaica, with a boatload of slaves, he was seized by the planter and informed that he also had been sold by the master of the vessel, a Liverpool skipper. In spite of his protests, he was fettered and dragged up country. A year or two later, a fellow countryman, returning to the Gold Coast, reported he had seen Amissa working as a slave in the white man's island. Apparently he was regretted, for his chief and his friends made a to-do, as a result of which the man was set free and taken to England. There, probably in order to conciliate the chiefs and population of the Guinea coasts,

his case was taken up by the African Committee. The Liverpool captain was prosecuted and Amissa was awarded five hundred pounds damages by Lord Mansfield, in March 1779.

Selling his own kind was the black chief's principal source of revenue and none was content till he had a factory near his seat of government. The first business of a factor was to pay the customs or license to trade, called coomey, which amounted in 1700 to a hundred pounds' worth of goods. "But yet before we can deal with any person," says the Dutch factor, Bosman,<sup>1</sup> "we are obliged to buy the king's whole stock of slaves at a set price, which is commonly one fourth or one third higher than ordinary; after which we obtain full license to deal with all his subjects of what rank soever. But if there be no stock of slaves, the factor must then resolve to run the risk of trusting the inhabitants with goods to the value of one or two hundred slaves; which commodities they send into the inland country, in order to buy with them slaves in all markets and that sometimes, two hundred miles deep in the country; for you ought to be informed that markets of men are here kept in the same manner as markets of beasts with us.

"Most of the slaves that are offered to us are prisoners of war. When the slaves come to Whydah, they are put in prison all together and when we treat concerning buying them, they are all brought out together on a large plain; where by our chirurgeons whose province it is, they are thoroughly examined, even to the smallest member, and that naked, too, both men and women, without the least distinction or modesty. Those which are approved as good are set on one side; and the lame and faulty are set

<sup>1</sup> Bosman's *Guinea*, London, 1705.

aside as invalids which are here called *mackrons*. They are such as are above thirty-five years old, or are maimed in the arms, legs, hands or feet, or have lost a tooth, are gray haired or have films over the eyes, as well as those which are affected with any distemper." Moore abated the price of a negro by one "bar" of currency for every tooth missing.

"The invalids and the maimed being thrown out," continues the Hollander, "the remainder are numbered and it is entered who delivered them. In the meantime, a burning iron with the arms or name of the company lies in the fire, with which ours are marked on the breast. We take all possible care that they are not burned too hard, especially the women who are more tender than the men.

"We are seldom long detained in the buying of the slaves, because their price is established, the women being one fourth or fifth part cheaper than the men. When we have agreed with the owner of the slaves, they are returned to their prison, where from that time onwards they are kept at our expense, costing us twopence a day a slave, which serves to subsist them like our criminals on bread and water; before which their masters strip them of everything they have on their backs, women as well as men; in which condition they are obliged to continue, if the master of the ship is not so charitable (as he commonly is) to bestow something on them to clothe their nakedness."

Seventeenth century accounts are full of stories of the arrogance and treachery of native chiefs and dealers. But the enormous increase in English shipping and the improvement of their armament had vastly strengthened

the white man's power on the infested coasts before the next century was half gone. Regular commercial relations were established between the firms of Liverpool and Bristol and the black "kings." This happy state of things was, however, pretty often interrupted by quarrels over "coomey," alleged double-dealing on the part of the Africans, and such kidnapping exploits on the part of the shipmasters as we have already recorded. If the natives were for some reason reluctant to trade or stood out for too high a price, impatient captains would resort to the methods of John Hawkins and force a trade by threats of bombardment. These piratical tactics were not always successful—in 1757, the natives of Bonny returned the fire and burned the ship *Phoenix*. In August 1767, a Liverpool skipper wrote home complaining of the behaviour of the people of Old Calabar and said he hoped he would soon assist in exacting vengeance upon them. At that time, a pretty quarrel was in progress between the natives of the Old Town and the New Town of Calabar on opposite sides of the river. The captains of five slavers lying in the stream now joined in a letter to the chief of the Old Town, "Grandy Ephraim," expressing their sorrow at this unhappy disagreement and offering their mediation. He was invited to come aboard and discuss the matter over a glass of rum. The "Grandy" (grandee?) responded gratefully to this offer, but instead of coming himself, sent his three brothers with a retinue of twenty-seven men. The princes, the eldest of whom was styled Robin John, were received on board the *Duke of York*, their attendants in their canoes remaining alongside. But so sooner had the envoys set foot in the cabin than they were set upon by the captain and crew, overpowered, and

put in irons. Meanwhile a fire was opened from the deck on the men in the canoes, who jumped into the water and made for the shore. The other English ships immediately fired on the fugitives. At this point, the natives of the New Town with whom the captains had been acting in concert, put out in boats and assisted in the massacre. The swimmers who had dodged the bullets were caught and butchered. The New Calabar chief came alongside the *Duke of York* and demanded the surrender of the prisoners. In vain the unfortunate blacks, with palms joined together, implored the captain not to violate the laws of hospitality by surrendering them to their deadliest foes. In exchange for a slave, Robin John was handed over and his head instantly struck off in sight of his brothers. These were carried off to the West Indies and sold into slavery. This abominable act of treachery on the part of the English skippers did not go altogether unavenged. In 1769, as the *Nancy*, of Liverpool, one of the vessels concerned in the business, lay at anchor off New Calabar, the slaves rose upon the crew and were overpowered only after a brisk musketry action. But the natives on shore, hearing the firing, came out in their canoes, took away all the slaves, and having plundered the vessel, set it adrift.

In a letter<sup>1</sup> dated "Ould Town Ould Calabar, January 13th, 1773," to his friend, Mr. Ambrose Lace, a well-known merchant of Liverpool, Grandy King George, chief of the Old Town tribe, complained of the behaviour of two shipmasters, Jackson, of Liverpool and Bishop, of Bristol. Suspecting the chief of unduly favouring Captain Sharp, a rival trader, these worthies kept up a fire on the town for twenty-four hours. When King

<sup>1</sup> Gomer Williams, op. cit.

George retaliated by seizing some of Bishop's boats and seamen, they vowed they would cut off his head and send it to the "duke" of the New Town. Finally, Jackson got away with a number of "pawns," among them being four of the chief's sons whom he had exposed on the yardarm during the firing. Grandy King George said he wanted his sons back and warned Mr. Lace not to send out any more captains like these.

In an extraordinary letter said to be written in his own hand, the negro chief also specified the goods most in demand upon the Guinea Coast. He wanted plenty of guns, "same as Sharp had," cutlasses, pewter ware, and for himself, a looking-glass six feet wide, a case of razors, a table and six chairs, and an armchair "for my self to sat in." Another dealer wanted two guns for every slave.

The trade was carried on by a somewhat complicated system, neither by barter nor by cash payment. The price of a slave was first stated in units of currency, which on the Gambia were "bars" supposed to be bars of iron weighing forty pounds, and on the Gold Coast strings of cowries of a certain length. But the price of the slave would vary according to the purchasing power of the unit expressed in other commodities called *heads of goods*. It was as though you fixed the price of a dog at ten shillings and insisted on being paid in such goods as ten shillings could at that moment buy. Sometimes a "bar" would not purchase an English shillingworth of rum. On the other hand, iron itself, crystal beads, brass pans and spreadeagle dollars tended to appreciate in value, and the inclusion of three or four of these *heads of goods* was required in the thirty or forty bars of miscellaneous goods

which made up the price of a prime slave. Sometimes six of the heads had to be given. "Men and women," adds Moore, "used to be dearer than boys and girls, but of late years there has been so great a demand for the latter in the markets of Cadiz and Lisbon that they fall for as much as the grown slaves." The children were probably employed as pages and domestic servants in the houses of the rich. Black servants were becoming fashionable throughout Europe in the early years of the eighteenth century.

In his instructions to a captain, a Liverpool slave-merchant, writing at a later date, gives the current value of a slave on the Guinea Coast as equal to six ankers of brandy, or twenty cabes (?) of cowries, or two hundred pounds of gunpowder, or twenty-five guns, or ten long cloths, or ten patterned chintzes, or forty iron bars—a sufficiently curious table of equivalents. The native dealers, according to Bryan Edwards, were accustomed to sell their slaves forty shillings a head cheaper than the factories.

In this horrible world where no man of the humbler sort could be sure he would not at any moment be seized, fettered and hurried off to an unknown doom; where no mother, letting her children out of her sight, could be certain of seeing them again; where in times of distress, the son knew not but that he might be sold by the father and the father knew he might be sold by the son; where the white man hovered about the estuaries and beyond the surf, waiting, like the crocodile, to snatch his human prey; the English factor lived a peaceful, pleasant life, as indifferent as the vivisector or the slaughterman to the suffering around him. Mr. Francis Moore "got up by

daybreak to enjoy the cool of the morning, and oftentimes took a ride of two or three miles from home, through woods and savannahs, the air being then very pleasant. As soon as he came back, he breakfasted on China tea; or for want of that, on a sort that grows wild in the woods, called Simbong. When he happened to want sugar, he made use of honey, which is reckoned very wholesome, but if taken too plentifully is apt to give the flux. When he could get neither sugar nor honey, which is sometimes all employed by the natives in making honey-wine, then he was forced to quit his tea for sweet milk, which is very plenty among the Foleys (Fulahs?). This he eat cold, with cakes broken into it, made of flour of rice or Guinea-corn, mixed up with water and baked over the fire in an iron pot.

“The country milk will seldom or never boil without turning. The author imputes it to the sourness of the grass which the cows eat. For dinner, he had frequently beef, fresh or powdered; for it would keep in salt six or seven days without spoiling. This he either boiled and eat with *kuskush* as the natives do; or else with *pompkons*, like spinach, both exceeding plenty. Fowls are so cheap that he bought them for three charges of gunpowder apiece; and when he wanted flesh or game, he sent out a hunter (allowed him by the company) who seldom failed of bringing in wild hog, deer, ducks, partridges, wild geese or crown-birds, all plenty in their seasons.

“The afternoon was the usual time for trade, but sometimes would last for three days together; which being his proper business, he never neglected. If it ended soon he would sometimes take a trip to the neighbouring towns and return home to supper; after which he amused him-



self till bedtime with reading, writing or visiting his neighbours; where he commonly was treated with palm-wine, honey-wine or else a fruit called *Kola*, which relishes water. He used frequently to go a-shooting, chiefly doves and partridges, they being found not far from the factory. He sometimes used to be thronged with guests, either traders or messengers from great men of the neighbouring kingdoms, who would frequently send him presents of cows, cloths and sometimes a slave; but this was only in expectation of more than the value in return. However, all these presents were for the company's benefit and he accordingly accounted for them.

"The negro women dressed his victuals in earthenware, very sweet and clean, made by the natives. He had a good large bed-chamber where in the rainy season, he always kept a fire; his bedstead was raised about two foot from the ground upon forks with the poles laid on them at the head and foot, and over that a hurdle made of split cane to serve instead of a sacking bottom. He had a bed made of coarse cotton cloths, six yards long and three wide, which were given to him by the king of Barsalli and his sister. Over his bed he had a kind of pavilion to keep off the musquitos. Other furniture, as he had little occasion for it, he was not troubled with."

The white man, whether resident or visitor, it need hardly be said, seldom condemned himself to celibacy. Quarrels, sometimes developing into feuds between the nations engaged in the trade, frequently arose about women. Bosman tells us how a half-caste girl, carefully reared by an English factor to be his mistress, was snatched from under his nose by a Dutch rival—who "soon cracked the nut which the Englishman had

promised himself." Skippers would borrow concubines from the traders or chiefs, take a fancy to them, and forget to return them. This sometimes led to ill-feeling, even among a people with very liberal ideas on sex morality. This licence in the matter of women was undoubtedly one of the great attractions of the trade in the eyes of many who embarked in it. No harm was done to the women. They were better off as concubines, either to black or white men, than as wives; for once married, they became the absolute chattels of their husbands. A Catholic missionary, named Merolla, lamenting the natives' superstitions, refused to give absolution to one of his flock, a negress, till she had persuaded her daughter to marry the man with whom she had been living "on trial." "No," said the dying woman, "I do not want my daughter to curse me for obliging her to marry where she does not fancy." In the end the priest persuaded the daughter, in order to save her mother's soul, to tie herself up to her partner; but he admits it was impossible to make other women believe in the peculiar power of his incantation to change sin into righteousness. Every people has its own superstitions.

Nor, as in Christian countries, was the burden of the parent's "guilt" transferred to the children. Descent among most of the tribes on the Guinea Coast was reckoned through the mother. That is to say, a man's property went to his sister's children; so the little half-castes, we may hope, did not suffer.

By the West Indian planters, the slaves were distinguished according to nationality as Mandingoes, from the region we now call Senegambia; Koromantees, from the Gold Coast; Papaws or Popos and Nagoes from the

Slave Coast; Eboes, from the coast of Benin. The Mandingoes were esteemed by Bryan Edwards the most gentle and generally best conducted, but they were expert thieves. "When a Mandingo is talking to you," said a French trader, "watch his feet, for he can steal as adroitly by means of his toes as a white can by means of his fingers." The tribe had interbred to some extent with the Moorish and Berber tribes to the northward, and it was not uncommon to find among them slaves who could read and write the Arabic character and who professed a rudimentary form of Islam. They made good foremen and gangsters and were suitably employed as watchmen or in the distillery or boiling house. Very easily managed were the Papaws from round about Whydah, and not so prone to despondency as the Eboes. The latter, a sickly-looking people with baboon-like profiles, readily resorted to suicide as a method of deliverance; notwithstanding, they are reproached with cowardice. At the sight of the branding iron, whether wielded by a black slave-dealer or a gentlemanly English planter, they would shrink back in terror; whereas (we have the story from Bryan Edwards), their companions in misfortune, the Koromantees, would run forward and expose their breasts to the iron. In all the House of Bondage, these negroes, called after a fort named Kormantyn, built by the Dutch on the Gold Coast, were esteemed the bravest, sternest and most ferocious. Presumably, they were the aboriginal inhabitants of the Gold Coast, who had been subjugated by the Fantis and Ashantis. They generally supplied the leaders of the slaves' insurrections and gave most trouble to the scoundrelly skippers. In due course, we shall give an example in an eye-witness's own words of their

magnificent fortitude under the most excruciating tortures. Christopher Codrington, a governor of the Leeward Isles, declared that the Koromantees were not only the best and most faithful of slaves but were nearly all born heroes. There never was a coward or a rascal of that nation; intrepid to the last degree, not a man of them but would stand to be cut to pieces, without a sigh or a groan, obedient to a kind master, implacably revengeful when ill-treated. No man deserved a Koromantee that would not treat him like a friend rather than a slave, had said the governor's father, whose slaves held him in such love and veneration that they offered libations at his grave and vowed that they would be his faithful slaves in Heaven when they had ceased working for his son on earth.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

THE anguish of the slave reached its culminating point during the Middle Passage, as the crossing from Africa to America was called, owing to its being the second stage in the slaver's round trip, out and home. The great majority of the captives had never seen the sea before—to venture upon it under pleasant conditions would have been a terrifying experience to most. Linked together in the coffles, they trod at least their familiar soil and some faint hope of rescue or escape was offered by every bush or forest. There was a chance of being bought *en route* and of finding themselves once more near home. Now, their arms pinioned behind them, they were packed into canoes, thence urged with whip and spear point up a trembling ladder of rope onto a deck which reeled and swayed. Their feelings must have differed little from those of a condemned felon mounting the last steps to the scaffold. Whatever hope remained to them on their mother earth must have expired at that moment.

Nevertheless—"Did the slaves appear to you dejected when they came on board?" was a question frequently asked of the slaver captains by the gentlemen sitting on the parliamentary commissions. And for the most part, the slaver captains assured the gentlemen that the slaves

were of a cheerful disposition and appeared to enjoy the prospect of a sea voyage. Except the natives of Bonny and Calabar, sulky, unadventurous people, who seemed almost reluctant to quit the coast. If we are to believe some of the witnesses, the conditions on board a slaver resembled those prevailing on the good ship *Mantelpiece*, under the command of kind Captain Reece. If ices were not handed round on trays, it was only because those delicacies were hardly known; *The Times* and *Saturday Review* would no doubt have been provided for the entertainment of the involuntary passengers if they had known how to read. In fact, passengers on a Mediterranean pleasure cruise might find themselves envying the delights of the Middle Passage.

But another officer employed in the trade drew a very different picture. "One real view, one minute, absolutely spent in the slave rooms on the middle passage, would do more for the cause of humanity than the pen of a Robertson or the whole collective eloquence of the British Senate."

A common type of slaving vessel employed about the middle of the eighteenth century was called a snow, of about 140 tons, square of stern, 57 feet keel, 21 feet beam, 5 feet between decks, 9 feet in the hold. The dimensions of the *Brooks*, a frigate-built ship of 320 tons burthen, without forecastle and pierced for twenty guns were stated by a Government inspector in the year 1786 to be length, 100 feet, beam 25 ft. 4 in., height between decks, 5 feet 8 in. The number of air ports was fourteen. Legally allowed to carry only 450 souls, on leaving the coast of Africa, she carried in addition to her crew of forty-five, 609 slaves (351 men, 127 women, 90 boys,

41 girls). Overcrowding was almost essential to carrying on the slave business. In days of sail, shipmasters could hardly guess the number of trips they might make in a year; and while overcrowding increased the mortality, it might equally result in more survivors to be sold for a profit. In Charles II's time Captain Tallers bought some negroes from another ship which had had them *three months* aboard. They were almost starved and "surfeycatted." They were fed with little else than musty corn. "There must have been something extraordinary," concludes the letter, "that so many died."<sup>1</sup> The voyage from Guinea to Antigua in the eighteenth century was reckoned at five or six weeks. The longest passage of nine ships reported was fifty days.

Between decks, where it will have been noted a tall man could not stand upright, the human cargo was stowed, males and females in separate compartments. The women were left unfettered. The men were generally kept throughout the voyage chained in pairs, wrist to wrist, ankle to ankle. Those who were left unchained were packed in couples, side by side, like sardines, or spoon-fashion—the head of one against the feet of the other. "They are about as comfortable," one witness told the commission, "as a man might be in his coffin." The slaves, said one captain, often quarrelled among themselves—not seldom because one of the pair either could not or would not move when his wretched partner wished to ease himself. One is not surprised to hear that those who went below in the evening apparently in good health were not seldom found dead in the morning; dead and living were often found chained together.

A ship's surgeon says: "Some wet and blowing

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Colonial*, 946, 1672.

weather having occasioned the port-holes to be shut and the grating to be covered, fluxes and fevers among the negroes resulted. While they were in this situation, my profession requiring it, I frequently went down among them, till at length their apartments became so extremely hot as to be only sufferable for a very short time. But the excessive heat was not the only thing that rendered their situation intolerable. The deck, that is the floor of their rooms, was so covered with the blood and mucus which had proceeded from them in consequence of the flux, that it resembled a slaughterhouse. It is not in the power of the human imagination to picture a situation more dreadful and disgusting. Numbers of the slaves had fainted, they were carried on deck, where several of them died, and the rest were with difficulty restored. It nearly proved fatal to me also." To these horrors must be added the agonies of sea-sickness, to which most of the wretched creatures must have been subject. Gomer Williams, comparing statistics, finds that out of 7,904 slaves purchased on the Coast, 2,053 died on the Middle Passage. The *Priscilla*, of Liverpool, lost ninety-four out of 350 slaves. On another occasion, during a gale, fifty slaves perished within eighteen hours. In 1764, the *St. Michael*, of Bristol, lost by sickness, her captain, chief mate, eleven of her crew and 200 negroes.

The Dutchman, Bosman, boasted that the Dutch ships were always kept sweet and clean, unlike those of the English, French and Portuguese, which were filthy and stinking. Probably, the same descriptives applied to all vessels employed in this infamous traffic. We do all we can, insisted the captains, to promote the happiness of the slaves on board. They were brought up on deck for



eight hours every day, while their quarters were being cleaned out, and they were encouraged to dance—in chains. Encouraged, indeed, as other witnesses testified, by the application of whips! “Those with swollen or diseased limbs were not exempted from partaking of this joyous pastime, though the shackles often peeled the skin off their legs. The songs they sang on these occasions were songs of sorrow and sadness—simple ditties of their own wretched estate.” During the night they were often heard to raise a melancholy dirge-like song. The women, who are not usually credited with the weaknesses of their white sisters, went into hysterics.

“Are the women exposed to the brutality of the seamen?” enquired a member of a commission. The witness replied (with a shrug as one imagines) that they were, assuming the negro women to have any sensibility on the score of sex or chastity. This reply probably disquieted the questioner more than the stories of another kind of brutality which began to leak out. Observing that her solicitude for her infant was wearing out a woman slave, the skipper snatched the child from her, dashed out its brains and threw it over the side.

Not only the Eboes, “prone to suicide,” but all these ill-fated passengers yearned for death as a deliverance. The slavers were specially built to prevent the negroes throwing themselves overboard. Dr. Trotter knew of a woman being whipped to death for having tried to kill herself.<sup>1</sup> They were flogged if they refused food, or a surgical instrument known as a speculum oris, was thrust between their jaws and they were forcibly fed—as women

<sup>1</sup> Of course, under the English criminal code, smart sentences are often imposed on would-be suicides to make them better pleased with life.

political offenders were fed not so many years ago in Britain. Thumb-screws which Clarkson saw on sale at a shop in Liverpool were also resorted to, to tame the spirits of the more obdurate. Sometimes, the black would smile in the face of his tormentor and murmur, "Presently we shall be no more." One monster, Captain Marshall, finding a child would not eat, flogged him almost continuously for four days, placed his swollen feet in water so hot that it brought off the skin and nails, and when he died, ordered the mother to throw him overboard. The woman could not bring herself to do this till compelled by the cat-o'-nine-tails.

This story was vouched for by a seaman named Isaac Parker. Like all similar accounts of the slave captains' brutality, it was stoutly denied. But those instruments of torture were not offered for sale in Liverpool as curiosities. In the year 1783, certain underwriters alleged in court that the master and officers of the Liverpool slaver, *Zong*, had thrown 132 living slaves overboard in order to claim the insurance as if they had died from natural causes. The victims selected were the sickliest of the cargo. Fifty-four were immediately jettisoned, and forty-two next day. "A few days later, the remaining twenty-six were brought on deck. The first batch of sixteen submitted to be thrown into the sea, but the rest, with a noble resolution, would not permit the officers to touch them, and leaped overboard after their companions." The English lawyers engaged in the case particularly reminded the jury that here there was no question of murder or manslaughter, the blacks according to law being only chattels.

If the ship was in distress, and the cargo had to be lightened, the slaves soon found their sufferings at an end.

In 1762, when the *Defence*, of Bristol, was lost off the Calabar Coast, the master and crew were saved and the whole consignment of 460 slaves perished.<sup>1</sup> A ship carrying some four hundred blacks having gone aground on a shoal off the coast of Jamaica, the white crew abandoned the vessel and taking to the boats, which they had filled with provisions, got ashore upon an island. At dawn, they perceived that the slaves had somehow managed to break their fetters and were coming ashore, either by swimming or by means of rafts which they had constructed and on which they had placed their women and children. The sailors, fearing that the negroes would consume the food they had brought with them, opened fire on them, murdering all the four hundred but two or three dozen, who were taken to Kingston and sold.

Such instances of extreme barbarity may have been rare; on the other hand, it may be argued that numbers have been left unrecorded, the participants having been almost inevitably the only possible witnesses. That there were skippers, like Newton, Crow and Snelgrave, who tried to use their slaves well, is not to be disputed. Snelgrave (1734) speaks of the danger of mutinies, and attributes them to inconsiderate usage by commanders; "but sometimes," he says, "we meet with stout, stubborn people amongst them (the slaves) who are never to be made easy (*sic*); and these are generally some of the Cormantines, a nation of the Gold Coast." On being asked what had induced them to mutiny, these people answered that the slaver was a great rogue to buy them, in order to carry them away from their own country and that they were resolved to regain their liberty if possible.

<sup>1</sup> Latimer, *Annals of Bristol*.

Among the arguments to which the slaver resorted in reply was to warn them that they would be seized and sold over again so soon as they reached the shore; which was often unhappily true. The brave Koromantee ringleader was hanged, despite his reminder that the slaver would lose the money he had paid for him.

"The slaves rose upon us," the captains frequently report. But they seldom if ever, made good their escape. One is sorry to hear how these uprisings failed, as they were bound to fail, however fortunately begun, owing to the black men's ignorance of seamanship. To a Liverpool historian we owe an account of a mutiny on the slave ship, *Thomas*. In September 1797, while the crew were at breakfast, some of the women slaves noticing that the arms chest had been left unlocked, swiftly rifled it and passed the weapons to the men. The whites were quickly overpowered and despatched, with the exception of twelve, who got away in a boat, and a handful who were kept by the mutineers in order to steer the vessel back to Africa. Unluckily, the blacks contrived to seize an American brig, the crew of which succeeded in escaping. But the prize was laden with rum. This proved the undoing of the captors. Crowding onto her deck, they soon became stupefied with drink. The sailors of the *Thomas* whom they had spared, turned upon them, killed the ringleader, mastered the remainder, and took the brig into Providence. The fate of the negroes may be guessed. Their comrades left behind on the *Thomas* were picked up by a man-of-war and sold in Jamaica.

Better luck attended the slaves who seized their opportunity while the death ship was still in sight of land. On January 12th, 1759, while the slaver, *Perfect*, was off

the Guinea coast, the kidnapped men broke loose, sent the captain and crew to their richly merited doom and ran the ship ashore. It is to be hoped that this time they escaped the landsharks and got away into the bush.

The white men preyed on each other as they preyed on the negroes. During the continuance of the traffic, England was more often than not at war with some other maritime power—in the seventeenth century with Spain or the United Provinces, in the eighteenth with America and France. The slave ship gorged with captives, was a coveted prize to warships and privateers alike. Between decks, the captives writhed in their chains while the cannon roared overhead and round shot came ploughing through the side. When the French destroyed the Dutch fleet off Tobago in 1677, three hundred negroes were burnt alive.<sup>1</sup> If, as in the case of the *Molly*, the ship was captured by the French and the cargo taken to Santo Domingo, the slaves had some reason to be grateful for the change of masters. Less fortunate were the captives of the *St. George*. Being attacked by two French men-of-war, the captain ran the ship aground. His 390 slaves ran away but were for the most part captured by the natives, their own countrymen—and probably resold. “By their behaviour on this coast,” complains a slaver, “the French seemed as if their only object was to destroy the trade; for they allowed seventy of the natives to plunder the *Ogden*, but fixed a fuze to the powder magazine which blew up the ship and all the black men on board. This wanton cruelty so exasperated the natives that they threatened to take revenge on the first French ship that fell into their hands. The blacks behaved extremely kind to all the

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Colonial*. 1677-80, p. 422.

Englishmen, and assisted them with what they wanted.”<sup>1</sup>

Those kindly Africans were, of course, the free trading natives of the coast. What baffles the understanding is that the slaves themselves on several recorded occasions were glad to fight besides their enslavers in defence of their floating prison. “Capt. Boates armed several of his negroes, who behaved very gallantly with the small arms, and eventually the privateer sheered off.” “I had fifty of our stoutest slaves armed,” reports the notorious slaver, Captain Noble, giving an account of an engagement with an American privateer. “They fought with exceeding great spirit.” Captain Hugh Crow, a Manxman who commanded one of the last slavers using the Gold Coast, had several of his finest slaves trained in arms; they were very proud of being so employed and were each rewarded with a pair of trousers, a shirt and cap.<sup>2</sup> Presumably, the poor wretches grasped at any chance of gaining the favour of their tyrants and at any variation of the horror of their existence.

Though any man’s account of himself must be received with caution, and particularly a slave-trader’s, we may conclude from his admitted fondness for animals that this Captain Hugh Crow was genuinely humane. He constructed an awning on deck for the benefit of his slaves, provided them with water for washing and lime-juice to rinse out their mouths, and with chew sticks to clean their teeth. Both whites and blacks on board enjoyed a broth of dried shrimps, mixed with flour and palm oil, and seasoned with pepper and salt. Yams, shelled beans and rice, with a proportion of pounded biscuit were the ordinary diet of the negro. For the sick,

<sup>1</sup> Gomer Williams, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

the kind captain prepared strong soups and "middle messes, prepared from mutton, goats' flesh, fowls, etc., to which were added sago and lilypee, the whole mixed with port wine and sugar." In the evening pipes and tobacco were supplied to the men and beads and other articles were distributed among the women to amuse them, after which they were encouraged to dance and run about the decks to keep them in good spirits. Unless the voyage was unduly protracted, the slaves, it may be supposed, were not generally underfed. It would not have paid their owners to starve them. The provisions carried by a ship for about six hundred slaves are stated at twenty tons of split beans, pease rice, etc.; 2,070 yams, averaging seven lbs. each; twelve cwt. of flour; ten barrels of beef; twenty cwt. of stock fish; sixty gallons of molasses; seventy gallons of wine; 330 gallons of brandy, rum, etc.; 200 gallons of palm oil; and 3,400 gallons of water.

The conditions of the traffic, it may reasonably be inferred, improved considerably towards the end of the eighteenth century, when it was increasingly subjected to public criticism, and when the price of slaves had risen. In 1664 it was reported from Barbados that the African Company's agent had some two hundred slaves left on his hands, all suffering from a malignant distemper "contracted through so many sick and decaying negroes being thronged together"; so that "most men refused to receive any of them, and Philip Fuisseire, a surgeon, to whom twenty were sold at a low rate, lost every one."<sup>1</sup> Before surgeons were carried, there can be little doubt that the sick slave was often fed to the sharks. But in 1791 the prices in Jamaica were, for a prime, able-bodied negro,

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Colonial*, 1664, p. 693.

£50; for an able-bodied woman, £49; for a youth, £47; for a girl, £46; and for children, £40 to £45. Shrewd traders would naturally exert themselves, as the ship neared port, to fatten their live stock and put them in good saleable condition.

It must have been with mixed feelings that the miserable wretches beheld the land again. To the more intelligent, it must have promised relief from, or an alleviation of, their sufferings. Many, on the other hand, must have believed their last hour was approaching, and expected to be cut up and cooked for the white man's dinner. The spectacle of a dozen dead white men (sailors who had mutinied) swinging on gibbets at the entrance to the port, far from satisfying these heathens that they had reached a Christian country, threw them into such a panic that kind Captain Crow had difficulty in preventing them throwing themselves overboard. Nor were their terrors allayed if they were sold, on arrival, by "scramble." Up the sides of the ship swarmed a gang of white men and tawny Jews, flourishing cards or tallies, which entitled them to choose so many negroes; they darted hither and thither through the affrighted crowd, grabbing this one and that and thrusting them aside, each eager to get the pick of the bunch, separating mothers from their children, with as little regard as a butcher separates sheep and lambs.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the screaming black women would throw themselves over the side and swim ashore, to be found days later, wildly wandering like cats turned adrift. This particular method of sale was prohibited in Bryan Edwards' day, and at his instance, by an act of the island

<sup>1</sup> Testimony of the ex-slaver, Rev. John Newton, *Parl. Papers*, Vol. 30, p. 144 (1790).



legislature, which also enjoined upon purchasers not to separate families. The normal mode of sale was by auction at the "vendue house." Conspicuous on these occasions in Jamaica were the Jew dealers. They had always taken an active part in the trade, as their religion allows, though rigorously excluded from the market in Roman Catholic countries. Probably the abolitionists were wrong in supposing the negro to be ashamed at finding himself or herself exposed naked for sale on the auction block, to have his body pinched and probed to test its soundness. They had gone through that ordeal, men and women alike, on the Guinea coast. We can even believe that they displayed, on being brought to market, very few signs of lamentation or apprehension, but, wearied out with confinement at sea, commonly expressed great eagerness to be sold, presenting themselves with cheerfulness and alacrity, and appearing mortified and disappointed when refused. If somebody detected a defect or blemish in any one of them, their fellows seemed highly diverted and burst out laughing.

Led away and marked by their new owner by means of a silver brand dipped in spirits of wine, they had more reason for thankfulness than those who remained unsold. If no coper could be induced to give a price for these, they were turned adrift. William Beckford, a planter, writing in Edwards' time, observed these "unhappy spectres, too weak for exertion, and reduced by hunger, lying about the streets, without clothing, without food, without compassion," imploring, "too often in vain," a drop of water or a crumb of bread to ward off the approach of death.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SLAVERY IN THE SUGAR ISLANDS

#### I

“THE negroes are the life-blood of the plantations. Without them we could not exist.” So cried the whites, insatiable in their demand for black flesh and blood. But, amid the ever-increasing swarm of Africans, the settler moved uneasily as the tamer in the lions’ den. Always he feared the brutes might turn and rend him. “The island was lately in alarm,” wrote a planter from Barbados under date, December 18th, 1683, “over an insurrection of the negroes. About a fortnight or three weeks ago a messenger came to my house at St. Michael’s, about two a.m., knocked at my door, and said that the whole of the leeward of the island was in arms over some alarm which, he said, thought came of a negro rebellion. But presently a message came from a Major of Horse to the Colonel that he could find no cause for the alarm; the negroes were quiet and had no arms. On enquiry, nothing could be made out against the negroes except four or five bold, insolent blacks who were well whipped as an example, and one old negro, belonging to Madam Sharp, who frightened his mistress by saying of some Christians who were beating negroes, that the negroes, ere long, would serve the Christians so; for which he was sentenced to be burnt alive and put to death.”<sup>1</sup> It is to be hoped that,

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Colonial Series*, 1683.

with the smell of roast negro in their nostrils and the screams of the burning man in their ears, Madam Sharp and her fellow Christians slept peacefully next night.

These Christians believed that brutality alone could curb brutality, that man could be restrained only by cruelty, not by kindness or education. The laws of England, bloody though they were, were not bloody enough for them. Between the panic ferocity of the planter and the helpless slave, the sceptre of England was for one moment interposed. The Assembly of Jamaica having submitted for the royal sanction a law similar to that already existing in Barbados, which imposed merely a fine on such as might wantonly and wilfully, and out of bloody-mindedness, kill a slave, King Charles II, to his undying honour, replied on February 17th, 1683, in these terms: "The king will not confirm this clause, which seems to encourage the wilful shedding of blood. Some better provision than a fine must be found to deter men from such acts of cruelty."

But the Barbados law, of which His Majesty was very probably ignorant, was not repealed, and after that we hear of no intervention by the sovereigns of this country on behalf of the wretched blacks. To the cruelties committed in the name of the law by generations of Englishmen who professed to be horrified by the severity of the Spanish Inquisition, the following extracts from the *State Papers*, Colonial Series, bear witness:

1675. "A runaway slave in Antigua, taken in rebellion, ordered to have his leg cut off. Another slave, George, burned to ashes."

1692 (November 2nd). ". . . We condemned three negroes to be hung in chains on a gibbet till they were

starved to death, and their bodies to be burned. The sentence was put in execution, and two of them who endured it for four days without making any confession, but then gave in and promised to confess on promise of life. One was accordingly taken down on the day following. The other did not survive."

1693 (Barbados). "Ten guineas paid to Alice Mills (*sic*) for castrating forty-two negroes according to sentence of commissioners for trying rebellious negroes."

1693 (August 22nd. Montserrat). "Peter Boone, a negro, for stealing nine pigs, was condemned to be cut in pieces and have his bowels burnt. Another, for having in his house fresh fish, was burned in the breast and had his hand cut off."

1695 (Montserrat). "A negro was burned for stealing a cow."

In Nevis, any slave throwing anything at a white person was to lose his hand. In Barbados, a negro, found guilty for the second time, of offering violence to a white man, was burned in the face and had his nose slit.

In 1730 the planters of Bermuda petitioned the crown that the killing of a negro by his owner should be no offence.

A witness before the commission of 1790 deposed that he saw seven negroes executed in Tobago. Their right arms were chopped off and they were then burnt at the stake. None of them uttered a cry. One, Chubb, laid his arm on the chopping block and walked calmly to the stake. Another was hung in chains for seven days before he died.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 30, p. 234.

On landing in the Spanish dominions the blacks were at least baptised and accorded some consideration as Christians. Under a Portuguese law dated March 18th, 1684, a priest had to be carried on every slaver. But when Compton, Bishop of London in Charles II's reign, urged that the negroes should be instructed in the Christian religion, the gentlemen of Barbados declared that the conversion of the slaves would not only destroy their property but endanger the island, since an instructed negro grew more perverse and intractable than others, and hence, of less value for labour or sale; the disproportion of blacks to whites, moreover, being very great, the whites had no greater security than the diversity of the negroes' tongues, which would be destroyed by conversion, in that it would be necessary to teach them all English; finally, the negroes were a sort of people so averse to learning that they would rather hang themselves or run away than submit to it. Three years before (in 1677) complaint had been made that the law forbidding Quakers to bring negroes to their meetings had not been sufficiently enforced. Samuel Baldwin, having been ordered to examine the laws of Barbados, reported that they were not quite consistent with the laws of England, since a slave was not tried for a capital crime by a jury, and could be sentenced to death summarily by two justices of the peace—a thing not unreasonable, seeing that the negroes were a brutish sort of people, accounted goods and chattels in the island, and dangerous by reason of their number.

The slave imported into these protestant islands found himself subjected to a yoke more inhuman than that of Dahome or Ashanti. "Thefts as would bring

criminals to the gallows here, are frequently punished there with only a few stripes," admits Major Martin of Antigua. Instead of being under the rule of a chief, he was caught between the fangs of a ruthless capitalism. The British West Indies, long before the close of the seventeenth century, had become a rich man's preserve. Sugar, it was discovered, brought in more money than cotton or indigo, but its production required considerable capital. Except in Barbados, where there was always a considerable population of poor whites, the poorer settlers, some of them descended from white slaves or indentured labourers, sold their holdings to richer men and emigrated to the mainland. Their place was seldom filled by a resident landlord. As was afterwards said of Ireland, the Sugar Islands swarmed with absentee proprietors. An American writer<sup>1</sup> draws attention to the number and extent of estates owned by members of the British aristocracy. The Earl of Balcarres had 474 slaves, the Earl of Harwood 232, the Earl and Countess of Airlie 59, Earl Talbot and Lord Shelburne jointly 79, Lord Seafield 70, Lord Hatherton jointly with the Bishop of Exeter and two commoners 540. The three Gladstones, Thomas, William and Robert, owned between them plantations using 468 slaves. The French planters regarded Guadeloupe or Martinique as their home. To the vast bulk of English proprietors the islands were investments. Very few of them ever visited the shores whence they derived their wealth. They troubled as little about the conditions under which it was produced as the owners of gold-mining shares trouble about the conditions of labour on the Rand. A sense of responsibility is, we know, a new thing among capitalists and those who

<sup>1</sup> U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*.

live on dividends. The British West Indies existed for over a hundred and fifty years as a gigantic factory, to supply sugar to Europe and fill the pockets of certain Englishmen with gold—gold, it should be added, which bought rotten boroughs and helped in the general corruption of political life.

The plantations on which these parasites batted were left in charge of gentlemen-managers, who constituted an important element in the social life of the islands—"overseers who enrich themselves, and live like princes at the expense of their thoughtless masters," exclaimed Miss Schaw, "feeding every day on delicacies which the utmost extent of expense is unable to procure in Britain." A vigilant eye was kept on them by the "attorneys," or agents, of the absent owner, and as often of the mortgagee—for the estates were usually heavily encumbered. St. Kitts is mentioned as almost abandoned to overseers and managers. The resident planters, comparatively few but a conspicuous body, dwelt in sparsely furnished, not unhandsome houses, approached by avenues. They were a hard-drinking, gambling, licentious lot, hospitable, open-handed and animated generally by the virtues and vices of the irresponsible despot. They were badly educated and quite untainted by the puritanism which permeated society on the American mainland.

Between the West Indies and the home country flowed the broad Atlantic, not to be crossed in those days by the beam of publicity. Till his conscience was tardily aroused towards the middle of George III's reign the Englishman's curiosity rarely strayed so far. To Canada and Australia went all sorts and conditions of men,

whose letters home spread an interest in their manner of life throughout every class of society. But the West Indies was not a field for emigration. Visitors from Europe were nearly all of the class to which the proprietors themselves belonged, their friends, their guests or their agents. Rollicking Royal Navy officers, remembering their shore leave on a plantation where everything had been staged for their edification, declared the slave owners were the jolliest fellows on earth, and the slaves the luckiest of devils. An ancient admiral, Viscount Shuldham, startled a parliamentary commission by confessing that while serving as a midshipman in the Antilles he often found himself envying the slaves—a confession which throws a strong light on life in the Royal Navy in those days. And Ladies of Quality and not much heart, writing from the veranda of Government House or the guest chamber of a colonial mansion, waxed lyrical over the Arcadia built up on slavery.

On Christmas Day, 1774, writes Miss Schaw from Antigua,<sup>1</sup> “we met the negroes in joyful troops on their way to town with their merchandise. It was one of the most beautiful sights we ever saw. They were universally clad in white muslin, the men in loose drawers and waistcoats, the women in jackets and petticoats, the men had black caps, the women handkerchiefs of gauze or silk which they wore in the fashion of turbans. Both men and women carried on their heads neat white wickerwork baskets, which they balanced as our milkmaids do their pails. These contained the various articles for market, in one a little kid raised its head from amongst flowers of every hue, which were thrown over to guard

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Lady of Quality.*



it from the heat; here a lamb, there a turkey or a pig, all covered up in the same elegant manner. While others had their baskets filled with fruit, pine-apples reared one on the other; grapes dangling over the loaded baskets, oranges, shaddocks, pomegranates, grenadillas, and twenty others whose names I forget. They marched in a kind of regular order. At this season the crack of the inhuman whip must not be heard, and for some days it is an universal jubilee, nothing but joy or pleasantries to be seen or heard. . . .”

The same observer describes her visit to the estate of Colonel Samuel Martin, “the loved and revered father of Antigua, to whom it owes a thousand advantages, and whose age is yet daily employed to render it more improved and happy. This is one of the oldest families on the island, has for many generations enjoyed power and riches, of which they have made the best use, living on their estates which are cultivated to the height by a large troop of healthy negroes, who cheerfully perform the labour imposed on them by a kind and beneficent master, not a harsh and unreasonable tyrant. The effect of this kindness is a daily increase of riches by the slaves born to him on his own plantation. He told me he had not bought a slave for upwards of twenty years, and that he had the morning of our arrival got the return of the state of his plantations, on which there were no less than fifty-two wenches who were pregnant. The slaves born in the spot and used to the climate are by far the most valuable and seldom take the disorders by which such numbers are lost, that hundreds are forced yearly to be brought into the island.”

Colonel Martin’s kindness is the more remarkable since

his father was murdered by his slaves in 1701, in consequence, Christopher Codrington suspected, of his harsh rule. Among resident planters at least by the end of the eighteenth century, a fairly humane treatment of their slaves was probably the rule rather than the exception.<sup>1</sup> Every visitor selects one or two for special commendation. Manifestly, the attitude of the owner towards slaves whom he had known or who had known him from birth must have been different from that of the paid agent who came as a stranger to the estate and whose only duty was to make it pay. "Monk" Lewis, an absentee proprietor, on a visit to his property discovered that his agent, engrossed in the management of a plantation of his own, had delegated his duties to a locum-tenens, with the result that discontent was rife and the slaves were always running away. Of the slaves on another of his plantations, more honestly managed, the same proprietor, however, wrote: "I never saw people look more happy in my life, and I believe their condition to be much more comfortable than that of the labourers of Great Britain." This was written in the Waterloo year, eight years after the suppression of the slave trade. Slaves had already acquired an enhanced value and emancipation was in sight.

In so far that their masters had to keep them alive by feeding them, the slaves in the West Indies might be accounted better off than the labourers at home. In Barbados, where land was scarce, they were fed from a common stock, the fruit, of course, of their own labour; in the other islands they were allotted land, in the propor-

<sup>1</sup> The author is not sure this could be said of Barbados or the newly-acquired colony of Demerara.

tion of one acre to six persons, on the produce of which they were required to support themselves. By the sale of their surplus produce, which Miss Schaw saw them bringing to market, they might under favourable conditions make as much as ten or twenty pounds a year. They earned their bread in the sweat of their brow. They could claim only the twenty-six Saturdays "out of crop" in which to cultivate their plots, in addition to Sundays and a few public holidays. Under Spanish rule in Trinidad, 134 days were allotted them, an allowance cut down to twenty-six Saturday afternoons plus Sundays, by an ordinance of Sir Thomas Picton, who was afterwards unsuccessfully prosecuted for sanctioning the judicial torture of a woman. If his plot was near at hand, the slave might devote to it a part of the noonday rest time. Often, however, it was in the mountains, six or seven miles away. Sunday, being market day, a good part of it must have been consumed by the journey to and from the plot and perhaps to the scene of his daily labours in addition.

The slaves lived in villages, situated near the sugar works, in low two-roomed cabins roofed with straw or wattle and built by them with timber supplied from the estate. They were not luxurious, admits Bryan Edwards, but suited to the tastes and meagre necessities of their tenants. Embowered in the vegetation of the tropics, they often impressed the northern visitor as being more agreeable dwelling places than they actually were. On his earthen floor, the negro was careful to keep a fire perpetually burning, without which he could not sleep in comfort.

Upon his allotment the old experienced slave was

expected to maintain the newly-arrived slaves to be "seasoned" or broken in. So far from regarding this as a hardship, the old slaves competed with each other for the privilege of receiving these apprentices. "The strangers, too," Bryan Edwards assures us, "were best pleased with this arrangement and ever afterwards considered themselves as the adopted children of those by whom they were thus protected, calling them parents and venerating them as such; and I never heard of the violation of a trust thus solicited and bestowed. In the course of eight or ten months, provided they are treated mildly and kept free of disease, new people under these circumstances become reconciled to the country and prove in all respects as valuable as the native or creole negroes." (This, we know, was not Colonel Martin's opinion.) Nevertheless, it is computed that not more than two negroes out of three survived their training. They were unused to the hard labour exacted from them and were enfeebled by melancholy and the rigours of the sea voyage.

The owner was expected and in some cases compelled by law to clothe his slaves. In Barbados, the men were provided once a year with caps, jackets and breeches; the women with caps, jackets, coats and petticoats. But nearly all visitors to the islands were shocked by a general disregard of decency. In Jamaica, masters are said to have troubled little whether their slaves went naked or not, except in the towns. By the negroes themselves this would not be accounted a hardship. The black women of Antigua, Miss Schaw noticed with disgust, could hardly be persuaded to wear a petticoat. But on holidays they loved to trick themselves out in finery on which they

spent most of their slender earnings. Dancing was their chief delight, and planters complained that they overtaxed their strength by over-indulgence in this pastime.

The conclusion cannot be resisted that the black folks were happiest in the islands which had inherited traditions from the Spaniards or the French. "In Grenada," we read, "they commonly go to their provision grounds about nine o'clock of a Sunday and return about twelve; the rest of the day, they are dressed and amuse themselves with dancing or walking till about seven, when they assemble and proceed to their evening prayers, which they never neglect on a Sunday throughout the year." Under the yoke of the former masters of the island, they had all been baptised into the Roman Catholic church. "After prayers, they return to their houses and there pass the evening." In order of humanity towards their slaves, the nations ranked thus: the Spaniards, the Portuguese, the French, the English, the Dutch. The laws and cruelties of the Hollanders were not worse than our own, but cruelty was much more frequent among them than among the English planters. To be sold to the Dutch was the worst punishment with which a troublesome slave could be threatened.

Funerals with the slaves as among so many undeveloped peoples were an occasion for rejoicing and such poor feasting as they could afford. One favoured slave asked to be allowed to celebrate his funeral while he was alive, a request which his master granted. Some defenders of slavery, not content with saying that it was a common thing for the blacks to spend large sums of money on entertainments, cited instances of slaves owning con-

siderable property! We hear of a negro named Jeffery, who purchased his wife's freedom for eighty pounds and possessed two houses which stood in her name. Ultimately, he bought his own freedom for fifty pounds. There were slaves who owned slaves. In the Leeward Islands an old slave, on purchasing his freedom, declared he was worth £500, his belongings consisting of slaves, houses and a boat in which he went fishing or which he hired out. Another negro, sold from Tobago to Grenada, brought with him £100 and left behind with his wife, a slave of his own, worth £40. But these cases if correctly reported must have been extremely rare. A Barbados planter admitted that strictly speaking a slave could not be said to own anything, and Lieutenant H. H. Dalrymple said he never knew one to possess anything of value. If, however, a slave did acquire any few possessions, the master that took them from him would be regarded with universal contempt.

Whatever might be the alleviations of his lot (and these, as we have seen, varied according to the caprice of his owner, the traditions of the island and the generation in which he lived), the slave was doomed to bondage and existed only for the profit of his owner. An American writer<sup>1</sup> has analysed the reports furnished between the years 1792-1796 to Mr. Robert Price of Penzance, England, the owner of a large and typical Jamaica plantation known as Worthy Park. For the service of the Great House, which presumably went unoccupied, fourteen slaves were allotted, including a Quadroon girl named Lizette. The overseer had eleven domestics. His house was also the headquarters of the nursing staff, which included a black doctor and a midwife. On this estate

<sup>1</sup> Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*.

there were thirty-one watchmen and keepers, eleven carpenters, eight coopers, four sawyers, three masons, twelve cattlemen and two rat-catchers. The office of these last was no sinecure, for the unconquerable rodents attacked the white man's plantations as relentlessly as the white man had attacked the aboriginal inhabitants.

The lot of these servants and craftsmen was light indeed compared with that of the slaves doomed to field work and the production of sugar. These were divided into three gangs. The first included at Worthy Park, sixty-four men between the ages of nineteen and sixty, though few of them were over forty, and seventy-three women from nineteen to fifty, but mostly under forty. Their duty it was in crop time to clear the land, plant the canes and work in the mill. The second gang did lighter work, such as weeding; it was composed of forty women and twenty-seven men, several of them unfit, diseased or pregnant. The third gang was made up of the children or picaninnies, who were employed in collecting green meat for the four-footed livestock. The Lady of Quality saw a field gang going to work, every ten of them followed by a black driver who carried a short whip and a long one. "You will easily guess," she writes, "the use of these weapons; a circumstance of all others the most horrid. They are naked, male and female, down to the girdle, and you constantly observe where the application has been made."

Arranged in rows, the slaves had each to dig out a section of ground to a depth of six inches. Often, the hoe had to be used with the force of a pickaxe, though in some islands, such as St. Kitts and in certain parts of

Jamaica, the lightness of the soil rendered the work comparatively easy. The furrow having been dug, was filled with manure and the cane planted. This work, called "holing," was extremely hard, and might have been better done with the plough. The slaves were kept at it for twelve or thirteen hours and in crop time, practically all day, with the intermission of two and a half hours at midday.

Their labour might have been lightened if it had not been thought necessary to proceed with the cutting of the canes and the actual manufacture of the sugar at one and the same time. The high pressure maintained at this season was also, according to one authority, due to the erroneous idea that sugar during the boiling process should never be allowed to cool. Power being supplied by mules, wind or water, the cane was crushed between rollers, and the juice allowed to flow along a conduit into the boiling house. Here, it was purified by passing through a series of copper cauldrons and thence conveyed to the curing house, to be strained and drawn off into casks. The negroes continuously employed in feeding the rollers stood a good chance of having their fingers sucked in, and Lady Nugent in Jamaica was shown a hatchet which was kept ready to save a man's arm at the expense of his hand. The "trash" or crushed canes from which the juice had been extracted was carried into the boiling house to be used as fuel. With an interval from Saturday night to Monday morning, the work was carried on by twenty-five men and women working generally in twelve-hour shifts. While the swift rotation of the rollers left the slaves employed in feeding them no instant's rest, their fellow workers in the boiling



house had to stand for hours till their legs gave way, and had to use all their strength to lift the heavy ladles and their contents from one cauldron to another. "Fancy standing over a steaming cauldron all day!" exclaimed the governor's lady. "I would not have a sugar estate for the world!"

Yet, in the opinion of a clergyman who spent many years in the island of St. Kitts, a worse task was gathering grass for the cattle, commonly assigned to seasons of drought. The slaves (and presumably the weaker slaves, according to the usual distribution of labour) had to wander for hours across dried-up, sun-baked expanses, unable to refresh themselves with fruits or drink or to repose in the shade. Often they would inadvertently stray within the limits of a stranger's plantation and to buy their escape would have to surrender their baskets of grass and begin their work all over again. Cases were reported of a half-starved slave being hacked to pieces with a cutlass for having trespassed and broken off a single cane.<sup>1</sup>

The negroes in Jamaica are overworked, declared a planter from Carolina. It was excessive labour that killed the slave and necessitated constant importation of fresh victims from Africa. But in the view of Beckford, himself a planter, a more dismal fate awaited the wretch who survived the horrors of the field and the mill. He speaks of the old and infirm negroes, set to watch the cattle all night or to give alarm in case of fire, who sat shivering in the rain, crouched over a miserable fire, without raiment or even a temporary shelter. "The bad policy of placing the old and infirm in situations of exertion and trust," says this writer, "is daily obvious on every plantation.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. James Ramsay, *Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves*, 1794.

The poor negro receives punishment after punishment as a consequence of his weakness, and perhaps without a foot to stand upon or a hand that can administer to the most common necessities of life, is expected to persevere in his nightly round of the cattle pens and canes, and is made responsible for every trespass and the most trifling neglect."

All law and custom in the West Indies was directed to making the slave work. Ever in his ears sounded the crack of the whip. By law punishment was restricted to thirty-nine lashes, but the dose could be repeated indefinitely. Two British officers, passing a barn in Barbados, heard the shrieks of a woman in mortal agony. They burst in the door and found a white man flogging a black woman who lay chained to the floor. Upon the officers' protesting, the ruffian cried out that he was well within the law, having given the wench only thirty-nine lashes at one time; that he had repeated the punishment three times already that night and would give her another thirty-nine before morning. In fact, he would flog her to death if he liked and probably did so. He added that he would certainly prosecute the officers for breaking down his door.

It was asserted in Parliament that in the year 1780 in Bridgetown, General Tottenham saw a negro youth entirely naked, who wore round his neck an iron collar with five long projecting spikes. His body was covered with wounds inflicted by a whip. His belly and thighs were almost cut to pieces, with running ulcers all over them, and a finger might have been laid in every one of the wounds. He could not sit down because his hinder part was mortified and it was impossible for him to lie

down on account of the prongs on his collar. He had been nearly whipped to death and then abandoned to starve. Nobody appeared to take the slightest notice.<sup>1</sup> In the same infernal island, a plague spot if ever there was one, the Rev. Gwyn Rees saw a girl dying by the roadside in consequence of a flogging. When the driver's arm was tired, the services of a "jumper," or professional flogger, were requisitioned. In Grenada, by a law dated October 13th, 1784, the clerk of the market was allowed 1s. 6d. for every negro flogged.

When the whip failed to subdue, other punishments were resorted to. The slave who ran away and was brought back was mildly chastised the first time. If he repeated his offence, he might be kept at work with a heavy log chained to his ankle or have to wear a collar with hooks which tore his flesh if he bent his head. Gwyn Rees told of a young black woman who was kept tied up to a block for twelve months. James Morley, in Jamaica, saw a slave man suspended by his joined hands from a crane while weights were attached to his feet to keep his body taut; in that position, he was flogged till the skin rose in welts. He was then beaten with ebony rods to let out the blood. Masters called "humane" caused the sufferers' wounds to be washed "with pickle," to prevent mortification. To withhold this dressing was considered an additional punishment.

In George III's time, as in Charles II's, the penalty in bloody Barbados for wantonly killing one's own slave was fixed at £15. If the slave belonged to another, the penalty was doubled and a further fine of £25 inflicted.

<sup>1</sup> Any more than at the present day, notice is taken in many European countries of the sufferings of animals. Some ladies in Rome, the author remembers, appeared highly diverted (1927) by the frantic movements of a dog driven mad with hunger and thirst.

If a slave died under punishment ordered by his owner, no person was liable to any penalty. Want was in no case to be accepted as an excuse for a slave's crime. All negroes employed in selling wares on account of their master had to wear a metal collar inscribed with the name of the owner. As in every country where white rules black, a pass system was early introduced. Owners were forbidden under heavy penalties to let their slaves leave their estates without a proper ticket—and woe betided the luckless negro who was found abroad without one! He was liable to be seized and whipped, sometimes to be pounced on by kidnappers or slave-stealers and released only after rough handling and blood-curdling threats enjoining him to keep his mouth shut. Slaves offered their freedom by a good master refused it on the ground that they would then have no one to protect them and would be liable to be beaten by the first white they encountered.

People like Lord Shuldham, who envied the slave, had in view only the negro belonging to a well-to-do planter. But slaves might pass from hand to hand, especially as their strength and health declined, till they fell into the hands of some needy speculator who could spend enough to keep them alive and no more. Two more wretched emaciated human beings than the slaves belonging to a bumboat woman at Bridgetown, Barbados, Pinckard had never beheld—they resembled hungry and distempered greyhounds, with their bones almost breaking through their filthy, eruptive skins, and their whole frames trembling with debility. Slaves were hired out as labourers, and the object of the hirer was to extract from them the maximum amount of work in return for his money.

Nor was the slave able to look forward with certainty to a shelter when worn out with old age and labour. This was assured him by the majority of the planters; but just as in Christian England when a horse has expended every ounce of its energy in its master's service, that master sells him without the least compunction to be cut up into cats' or Belgians' meat, so there were owners who would turn their worn-out slaves adrift to rot by the roadside. Diseased and infirm negroes were seen by Pinckard when the eighteenth century was three parts gone, begging in the streets of Barbados. Another witness said he saw cast-off slaves dying on a dung hill. In Grenada, Dalrymple knew of an old negress, incapacitated by illness, who had been turned off the estate and was being supported by charity in the town of St. George. Revolting callousness of this sort was so far common that towards the end of the century it was thought worth while to legislate against it and to make owners responsible for the maintenance of their abandoned slaves thrown on the parish.

The well-treated slave might not in the long run fare much better. Bryan Edwards protested in the British Parliament against the abominable practice of selling the negro by auction in satisfaction of his master's debts—under a law passed at the instance of the planters' numerous creditors in England. "In a few years," says the slave-owner, "the negro gets himself comfortably settled, has built himself a house, obtained a wife and begun to see a young family rising about him. His provision ground, the creation of his own industry and the staff of his existence, affords him not only support but the means also of adding something to the mere necessities of life. In this situation, he is seized on by the sheriff's

officer, forcibly separated from his wife and children, and perhaps sent to terminate his miserable existence in the mines of Mexico; and all this, without any crime or merit on his part, real or pretended. He is punished because his master is unfortunate."

The same writer does not deny that owners were occasionally—very rarely, as he maintains—guilty of cruelty towards their human property. "The great and incurable defect in the system of slavery," he goes on to say, "is that the evidence of the slave cannot be admitted against a white person, even in cases of the most atrocious injury." What chance the injured slave had then of obtaining redress from a tribunal composed entirely of white men, most of them slave-owners, may be imagined. To mitigate this hardship, the justices in Grenada appointed three guardians of the slaves and in Jamaica a council of protection was constituted in each parish. One or two cases towards the end of the eighteenth century are proudly quoted as proofs of the impartiality of these bodies. There was a white man hanged in Grenada, in the year 1776, for the murder of another man's slave; but he had the ill luck to be a stranger to the island and a ne'er-do-well and unable to make good the loss of the slave to the owner—altogether a very proper person to be made an example of and to serve as a demonstration of the white man's justice. But when a drunken planter stabbed a slave to death in the street at Bridgetown, he was suffered to go scot free on paying his victim's value; which is what one would expect in Barbados.

## II

The slaves in the English islands having been denied the light of Christianity, they did not observe the Christian laws of marriage. This is not altogether to be regretted, for nothing, it is safe to say, sweetened the slave's existence more than his sexual freedom. If the joys of heaven were not for him, he could at any rate indulge his flesh. These black folk took partners and changed them as fancy dictated. A negress in Antigua had nine children by as many different husbands. But no one acquainted with human nature will be surprised to hear that these free unions often resulted in life-long associations which were to all intents and purposes marriage. The disproportion between the sexes, artificially maintained by the slave trade, necessarily encouraged promiscuity. The negro did not resign himself easily to monogamy. A free Christian negro who had married, on being reproached by his wife for keeping a mistress under the same roof, asked wonderingly: "Why should you complain? You are my wife however many other women I have." A man slave was urged by his owner to content himself with one wife. "Why should I?" he made answer, with the pertness which no flogging could cure the slave of. "You white men not satisfied with one wife—why should poor black man be?"

The white man in the West Indies was not satisfied with one woman. It is on record that, in the French Assembly of 1848, a religiously-minded deputy objected to the introduction of a law to prohibit public cruelty to animals as containing a principle opposed to true morality.

"For," said he, "every man has a right to abuse as well as to use his own property." And the right to abuse their property was certainly cherished by slave-owners in respect of their female slaves.

The chastity of the slave woman till within fifty years of her emancipation, was at all times liable to invasion by the white man. It was doubted whether she resented this. "The young black wenches," observed a Lady of Quality, "lay themselves out for white lovers, in which they are only too successful. This prevents their marrying their natural mates, and hence a spurious and degenerate breed, neither so fit for the field nor indeed for any work as the true-bred negro. Besides, these wenches become licentious and insolent beyond all bearing, and as even a mulatto child interrupts their pleasure and is troublesome, they have certain herbs and medicines that free them from such an encumbrance, but which seldom fails to cut short their lives as well as that of their offspring." It is asserted by the Scotch lady's contemporaries that the overseers and managers as well as the owners deliberately helped to stock their plantations with slaves of their own blood.

It may easily be believed that the young black wenches welcomed the attentions of the master or the overseer. Proudly they described themselves as "Mr. Such-a-one's love"—the term mistress being obviously inappropriate in their case. Generally employed as a house-wench or domestic servant, they were respectfully addressed by the other slaves as Miss Polly, Miss Cowslip, Miss Venus, as the case might be. For a while, the girl enjoyed a taste of something like freedom. Her paramour would see to it that her sleek skin was not disfigured by the lash nor her



strength exhausted by menial labour. He would bestow on her a few poor trinkets and stuffs. If the white man had a wife, then indeed she might have to pay dearly with buffetings and scoldings for her elevation. But the black woman's charms are soon over-ripe and faded. All too soon she would be superseded and glad to share the cabin of some man of her own colour. She might see her mulatto children growing up and promoted in turn to be house-wenches in their father's mansion. Indifferently, she might notice their incestuous intercourse with their half-brothers. Nobody spoke of her now as Miss Cowslip—she had become Mammy Strumpet, perhaps, or Old Sam's Nan.

At times, the black concubine showed she was a woman and not merely a female animal. Sometimes, there surged up in her the passions of a Clytemnestra. Dark domestic tragedies stained the lives of the planters and in most of them a black or brown woman played some part. In the year 1800, Molly, a planter's love, held the candle while her negro lover murdered her master and paramour in his bed. "Monk" Lewis assisted at the trial of a girl of fifteen for attempting to poison her lord. She was sentenced to death and smiling defiantly, declared her only regret was that she had not succeeded. More often, however, it was the master's "love" who betrayed her own people and interposed between them and the legitimate object of their vengeance.

At the ports, as one might expect, tavern keepers kept slave girls for the entertainment of their guests. "The Hostess," says the surgeon we have so often quoted, "is to thallly a black or mulatto woman, who has been the animal<sup>white</sup>rite enamorata (*sic*) of some buccra white man,

from whom she has obtained her freedom. It is to her advantage her attendants should be as handsome as she can procure them." At one of these places Pinckard met an interesting girl, a quadroon, who might have obtained her own freedom but would then have had to leave behind her little mustee daughter, a slave to her mistress.

The issue of white and black has resulted, as is well known, in various kinds of coloured people. The mulatto, it may be recalled, was the child of a white man and a black woman; the quadroon of a white and a mulatto; the mestizo or mustee, of a white and a quadroon. In slave days, the offspring of a mustee by a white was at last white by law and entitled to all the rights and privileges of a white. It follows that such a white person's mother might still be a slave.

Natural feeling was by no means absent in the West Indian planter. Not being tainted with puritanism to the same extent as the American of the mainland, he very often proclaimed his connection with a slave woman by giving her or their children freedom. In 1762, the Assembly of Jamaica decreed that a testamentary devise from a white person to a negro or mulatto not born in wedlock, exceeding in value £2,000 currency, should be void, and the property go to the heir-at-law, but this statute was often avoided by private bills. In course of time a considerable free population of coloured people grew up in the islands. Until the dawn of liberty, these people were denied all civic rights and not being able to give evidence in the courts, were in some respects worse off than the slaves who had their masters to protect them. Every generation removed from the negro looked down on that which preceded it. The pure black in return

affected to despise the half-breeds. Mulattos acquired slaves and were reputed to be harsh taskmasters. But all the world over there are people who only value liberty if it conveys the right to oppress others.

The young women of colour who had "tolerable persons" were universally maintained by white men of all ranks and conditions as kept mistresses. In their dress and carriage, these ladies were modest and in their conversation reserved; and they frequently manifested a fidelity and attachment towards their keepers, which if not virtue, was something very like it.<sup>1</sup> The young men of colour were left to find mates among the women discarded by the whites or failing these, among the negresses, thus arresting the evolution of their children.

To the white man it mattered not at all whether the woman he fancied was esteemed the wife of a slave. She had to do his bidding. In some islands, by a primitive law of hospitality, the white guest was furnished with a bed-fellow. Slave women were flogged for refusing this office. To remedy this state of things a law was passed in Grenada as late as 1788, making it an offence to debauch a slave's wife, the offender, if he was the master, being fined £165; if an overseer, twice his salary; and if a stranger, £50.

The necessity for the continued importation of fresh negroes from Africa is constantly laid at the door of the slave woman. She did not want children, we are told. Bearing them interfered with her licentious mode of life and rendered her less attractive to men. If this was true, she is not to be blamed. When her sex-appeal was gone, she became the cheapest of beasts of burden. Besides—

<sup>1</sup> Bryan Edwards.

who would wish to bear slaves—children that might be taken from one? At Kingston, a slave woman had two little boys. Being in want of cash, her master sold one. The mother made such lamentation that she could only be stopped by a severe flogging. She sat with her remaining child clutched in her arms, weeping silently. Presently, her master sold that child also. The mother went mad.<sup>1</sup>

In vain, the black child in the sick house implored his “mammy” to stay with him. The driver hurried her to the fields. If the child was being whipped, the poor mother could do no more than the vixen which sees its cubs destroyed on a joyous day of cub-hunting.<sup>2</sup>

Appreciating with a sensibility rare in men of his generation the full horror of slavery, Surgeon Pinckard was struck by the ordinary manner and appearance of two slave girls, aged sixteen and eighteen, with whom he talked as they sat on the steps of their master’s house in Barbados. “They conversed with ease and affability, but were very respectful and unassuming; and their whole conduct might have done credit to European servants, not of the lowest class.” It was strange to reflect that these decent pleasant-spoken girls were absolutely at the mercy of their owner’s appetites and might be sold semi-naked next day at the auction block.

In Cuba, under the mild Spanish law, a slave could be taken away from the owner who maltreated him (a right which should be conceded to animals). The white father of a slave child enjoyed a preference over any other would-be purchaser. The priests recommended dying

<sup>1</sup> *Antigua and the Antiguans*, 1844.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of going to press, we read that a dog has been condemned to death by the magistrates of Barry (Glamorgan) for biting a boy in defence of its young.

proprietors to emancipate their human property and the law raised no sort of impediment to their doing so. But in the British islands, manumission was discouraged. The free people of colour were esteemed useless and dangerous. Very properly, too, the community had to be on its guard against the man who freed his aged and infirm slave in order to be discharged of all responsibility for him. In the Leeward Isles the planter who wished to free his slave had to pay £500 into the Treasury if the slave was native-born, and twice that sum if he was a stranger. Similar restrictions were imposed by most of the insular legislatures, and in no case could a manumission decreed by a dying owner be given effect to until all claims against his estate had been satisfied. A slave on the very brink of liberty might then be sold out of the country, as Bryan Edwards has shown us. A male slave could only hope by years of unremitting toil and hoarding of his petty earnings to make a bid for his freedom, unless, as sometimes happened, he married a free woman with money. For the women, as we have seen, there was an easier road. For a while the path to freedom appeared hopelessly blocked by the suppression of the slave trade. The planter held more tenaciously than ever to his livestock. Lewis, as humane a planter as ever drew dividends from a sugar estate, gives us many instances of this, some of them pathetic enough. Mary Wiggins, a pretty mulatto girl belonging to him, had two children by the white overseer of a neighbouring estate, who wanted to buy the three of them; but Lewis would only sell on condition of his finding another slave in exchange for them which, at that period was exceedingly difficult. Nicholas Cameron, another of Lewis's slaves, was the son

of a white man, who on his death-bed, charged his nephew and heir-at-law to procure his freedom. With this kinsman's assistance, Nicholas raised £150 and proposed to exchange himself for a young woman on another estate. But the woman had a daughter which she would not leave behind her and which her owner refused to sell. Nicholas could only look on in despair when he heard the substitute he had offered for himself was to be sold to a third planter. His hopes rose again—the woman declared she would rather kill herself than be sold to anyone but Lewis. She disappeared and her owner, quailing before such resolution, announced that if she could be recovered, he would let Lewis have both her and her child for a fair price. She re-appeared. But again the cup of liberty was dashed from poor Nicholas's lips. Her child had been employed by her mistress, a free mulatto woman, to steal some ducks. Taken in the act, the little girl blurted out the truth and was so severely thrashed by the guilty woman that she was sent to a hospital by the magistrates and ordered to be held as a witness at her mistress's trial. By this time, the unlucky Cameron may well have abandoned all hope of redeeming himself. But fate suddenly tired of the cat-and-mouse game she had been playing. The magistrates released the child and she and her mother contentedly passed into Mr. Lewis's possession while Nicholas Cameron passed out of it.

The shorter cut to freedom was tried over and over again by the ill-used people. The black man was not a half-sensible beast of burden, but a man who deeply resented his condition and in whose heart smouldered a just anger against his abominable taskmasters. The fears

of the earlier planters were justified by repeated servile insurrections. These revolts of the damned against the fiends were all unsuccessful, either suppressed with hideous cruelty or nipped in the bud through the treachery generally of some soft-hearted servant who did not wish her master or mistress to be "murdered." The Koromantees were almost always the prime movers in these conspiracies. In 1676, according to a contemporary account published in London, their design "was to choose them a king, an ancient Gold Coast negro, one Coffee, who should have been crowned in a chair of state exquisitely wrought. . . . Trumpets to be made of elephant's teeth and gourds were to be sounded, with a fell intention to fire the sugar canes and so run in and cut their masters'—the planters'—throats in the respective plantations whereunto they did belong." Hearing a young Koromantee tell another that he would have no hand in murdering the white folk, Anna, a house-wench belonging to Justice Hall, informed her master, "thinking it a pity such good people as her master and mistress should be destroyed." The plot was frustrated and the ringleaders apprehended. Six were burnt alive. One of the victims seemed about to make a confession when his neighbour at the stake ("one Tony, a sturdy rogue, a Jew's negro") jogged him and was heard to chide him with the words, "Thou fool, are there not enough of our countrymen killed already?—art thou minded to kill them all?" Whereupon, the weaker vessel closed his mouth and refused to open it again. When the Christian spectators cried out to Tony, "Sirrah, we shall see you fry bravely by-and-bye," he answered undauntedly, "If you roast me to-day, you cannot roast me to-morrow."

Bryan Edwards gives a detailed account of the execution of three negroes taken after the serious but abortive rising in Jamaica in 1760. Expressing no word of disgust at the inhumanity of their executioners or of commiseration, the planter could not but admire their heroic fortitude. The man who was burnt alive uttered not a groan, and saw his legs reduced to ashes with the utmost composure, seizing the opportunity, one is glad to hear, to dash a flaming brand in the face of his tormentor. Two others were hung up on a gibbet to die. They died, one on the eighth and the other on the ninth day. "They never uttered the least complaint, except only of the cold at night, but diverted themselves all day long with intercourse with their countrymen. Both laughed immoderately at something that occurred."

But it was not by passive heroism that the yoke of the white demons could be overthrown. The slaves could not read, they could communicate with each other only with difficulty, they were divided by barriers of race and language, worst of all, they were held together by no sense of racial unity. Only in Hayti and Santo Domingo did the slave finally burst his shackles, and establish himself as master in the land which the whites had stolen from its original inhabitants and enriched with the black man's sweat. In Jamaica the English were cunning enough to come to terms with the Maroons, the descendants of the Spaniard's slaves, who had refused to accept the English yoke and had maintained their freedom in the interior of the island. By the terms of the treaty, the Maroons basely engaged themselves to surrender any fugitive slaves who should seek refuge among them, and to lend their assistance in suppressing any servile insurrection.



It is gratifying to know that they carried out their engagements half-heartedly. On one occasion they brought in a number of ears which they said represented the number of their victims, but which, on enquiry, were found to have been cut off the bodies of the slaves already butchered by the whites. Disgusted by these instances of "treachery," and satisfied that the Maroons were more dangerous than useful, the whites at the end of a bloody war, in which mastiffs proved more useful than their troops, made an end of the community and deported the survivors, first to Nova Scotia and ultimately to Sierra Leone. Major-General Walpole, the British commander, refused a sword of honour presented to him by the Jamaica House of Assembly, on the ground that the capitulation he had signed with the Maroons had been insufficiently honoured.

So for two hundred years the wretched Africans, torn in most cases from their own country, for no fault of their own, toiled in their chains and groaned under the taskmaster's whip, to enrich the gentlemen of England. "These people one day will surely find a Moses," prophesied a high-minded young Englishman,<sup>1</sup> born among them on a plantation. He lived only long enough to see the first colours of the dawn.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. R. B. Nicholls, Dean of Middleham.

## CHAPTER SIX

### ABOLITION AND EMANCIPATION

#### I

SLAVERY endured under the governments of Christendom because it is not positively condemned as unlawful in the Scriptures. If the Portuguese, for kidnapping men and women on the coasts of the Sahara, or the Spaniards, for holding people to slavery in America, had been excommunicated, this sorry chapter in history would never have been written. That the Popes would gladly have condemned the institution is certain; Isabel the Catholic, and Charles V, consented to its establishment only after taking counsel of their ecclesiastics, and with painful reluctance. But the silence of the Scriptures gave consent which was made explicit by Augustine and the step-fathers of the Church.

Yet, by a seeming paradox, it was the Protestant planters' refusal of baptism to the enslaved negroes which offended opinion in the mother country, and raised doubts as to the lawfulness of the institution. Broad dogmatic principles make slow headway among the English. The declaration that man could have no right of property in another man—that to steal a man's person was the worst of thefts, since it included all that belonged to him—would have left the vast multitude cold. Britons had to be shocked by hearing that their black fellow men were

being kept out of the way of salvation, and to be pained by hearing they were subjected to hard labour and cruel treatment before they would consider their rights to liberty.

The first protest on behalf of the Africans in our colonies came, in fact, from a religious body, the Quakers. In 1671, George Fox and William Edmundson, going out to Barbados to comfort the colony of Friends which had been founded sixteen years before by two women, were distressed by the sight of so many human beings in bondage, both spiritual and physical. Fox adjured his fellow members to deal mildly and gently with their slaves, and after a certain number of years to set them free. When brought before the governor and charged with making the negroes Christians, to the great danger and prejudice of their owners, Edmundson replied that it was right to bring them to a knowledge of Christ who had died for them and all men, that they would be then less likely to rebel and cut people's throats, and that it was wicked to stint them in meat and drink while permitting them liberty to be common with women like brutes. After this, as we know, the Quakers were forbidden, under dire penalties, from bringing negroes to their meetings. Into the hands of a Church of England parson, Morgan Godwin, these sectaries pressed a paper, reproving him and all other priests for neglecting their duty towards the heathen. Godwin was stung by the justice of the rebuke. On his return home he published in the year 1686 a tract dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury, under the title *The Negroes' and Indians' Advocate*. This, says Clarkson, seems to have been the first work undertaken in England expressly in favour of the cause.

Richard Baxter, the Presbyterian divine, was not concerned only for the negroes' souls. In his *Christian Directory*, published about the same time as Godwin's tract, he denounced those who took the Africans and made them slaves as the worst of robbers. At intervals throughout the first half of the eighteenth century the lawfulness of slavery was debated, and efforts made in sermons and philosophical treatises to rouse the anything-but-lively conscience of the English people to some realisation of the captives' pitiable plight. The most definite pronouncement came, as might be expected from one who had stigmatized cruelty to brute animals as a sin—a divine named Dr. Primatt. "The white man," he said, "can have no right by virtue of his colour to enslave the black man." Meanwhile, humane opinion, independently of the churches, was making itself heard. Men of letters, poets and playwrights, among them Sterne, Pope, Southern, Savage, Thomson and Cowper, appealed, each in his own way, on the slave's behalf to the sentiments of the worldly and the cultured, and must have inspired many uncomfortable questions addressed to gentlemen from the West Indies visiting in polite circles.

And not to these visitors alone. There were slaves in Britain, if not slavery. Negro pages grinned in the background over the white shoulders of Charles II's beauties, and hung behind the coaches of Millamant and her sisters. A black page was as fashionable as a spaniel, and was, like him, endowed with a collar, as anyone may see from the bust of King William's favourite slave at Hampton Court. In the *London Gazette* of March 1685, a reward was offered for the return of a runaway slave named

Jack White, wearing a silver collar inscribed with the name and arms of his owner, Colonel Kirke.

There was at least one man in London, in the reign of William III, who must have smiled drily at the sight of his noble friends' sable domestics. This was Lord Chief Justice Holt, one of the not-too-numerous jurists who have combined sound principles with good law. A slave had been sold in Virginia, and an action was brought in the King's Bench to recover his value; but in the pleadings it was stated that the defendant was indebted to the plaintiff in the parish of St. Mary-le-Bow, for a slave *there* sold and delivered. Holt ruled that the contract was illegal. "As soon," he said, "as a slave comes into England he is free. One may be a villein in England but not a slave. The action could have been maintained if the sale had been alleged to have been in Virginia and slaves were saleable there." Judgment was arrested. Later on, his lordship was more emphatic: "By the common law, no one could have property in another man, except in special cases, as a villein or captive taken in war, but in England there is no such thing as a slave, and a human being never was considered as a chattel to be sold for a price like an ox or an ass."

When St. Benedict looked on a captive, his fetters fell clanking to the ground; but no such effect was produced by Holt's ruling. Who was there to tell the slaves that the Lord Chief Justice said they were not property? People went on keeping their slaves and bought and sold them. But the ungrateful creatures often ran away, and got themselves baptised, whereby it was commonly believed they became free. The slave-owners were troubled, and, to remove all uneasiness left behind

by Holt's judgment, they sought, in 1729, the opinion of Yorke (afterwards Lord Hardwicke) and Talbot, the chief law officers of the crown. The following opinion was obtained: "A slave coming from the West Indies into Great Britain or Ireland, either with or without his master, does not become free, and his master's right to property in him is not thereby determined, and baptism doth not bestow freedom upon him nor make any alteration in his temporal condition in these kingdoms. We are also of opinion that the master may compel him legally to return again to the plantations."

There was no one to test this iniquitous opinion in the courts. The negro, like the animal of to-day, lay at the mercy of any lawyer who was able to twist the law for the convenience of the powerful.<sup>1</sup> So the law of England was interpreted for fifty-three more years, during which period it was estimated that there were twenty thousand slaves in London alone. Complaints were heard that they ceased to consider themselves slaves in this free country, and would not put up with an inequality of treatment between them and white servants. If put to harder work they became sullen, spiteful and revengeful. It was therefore held to be highly impolitic to introduce them as servants here, where it was impracticable to use that rigour and severity which was absolutely necessary to make them useful.

On January 28th, 1763, a negro boy, forming part of the effects of a broker who had been hanged at Tyburn, was put up for auction and knocked down for £32. Perhaps the first instance of the kind in a free country, commented *The Gentleman's Magazine*; but negro boys had been sold at the Virginia Coffee-house, Threadneedle

<sup>1</sup> The whittling down of all acts for the protection of animals illustrates this.

Street, in 1728, and at the "George" in Chancery Lane, in 1756. The same thing was going on all over the country. A healthy negro girl, aged about fifteen, was offered in 1761. Ten years later, the *Stamford Mercury* denounced a similar sale at Richmond as shocking. In *Williamson's Advertiser*, a Liverpool paper, under date, September 8th, 1758, we read: "Run away from Dent, in Yorkshire, 28th August last, a negro man, about 5 ft. 6 in. high, aged twenty years and upwards, broad set. Whoever shall bring him back to Dent shall receive a handsome reward from Mr. Edmund Sill of Dent. . . ." How many of these fugitives made good their escape is not recorded. The sympathies of the middle class and the common people were certainly with the slave.

One day, in 1765, Mr. Granville Sharp, a clerk in the Ordnance Department, visiting his brother, a medical man, noticed a dilapidated negro who had been receiving free treatment for injuries inflicted by his master, one, David Lisle, a Barbados planter. This ruffian, thinking he had rendered the slave useless, turned him adrift. Sharp, a quixotic young man of the type now contemptuously designated crank, found his interests keenly aroused. When the negro, whose name was Jonathan Strong, had recovered from his injuries, Granville found him a job as messenger to an apothecary. Some time later, Lisle caught sight of his former slave on his errands, now robust and hearty, a saleable article, and directed him to be seized by two of the Lord Mayor's officers. He then sold him to John Kerr for £30, and had him confined in the Poultry-counter, pending shipment to the West Indies on a vessel commanded by Captain Laird.

The news of this was brought to Granville Sharp.

Having warned the gaoler of the Poultry-counter not to give up his prisoner, he prevailed on Sir Robert Kite, the Lord Mayor, to have the negro and the parties to the affair brought before him. After much dispute between his protector and Kerr's attorney, during which the poor, trembling black seemed ready to sink into the floor, the Lord Mayor discharged him from his confinement, telling him he could go where he would. Upon which, Laird laid his hand upon him, saying, "Then I claim you as my slave." But Sharp, upon a hint from Mr. Beech, the coroner of London, threatened to charge Laird with an assault on the person of Jonathan Strong. Awed by this, the skipper released his hold, and all parties left the court.

In their fury, the man-catchers retaliated by claiming £200 from Sharp for depriving them of their property. When his solicitors advised him that the law was against him, Sharp refused to believe the law could be as opposed to natural right as so many lawyers, in the interests of the property owner, pretended. He set himself to study it. In 1769 he produced a memorandum on *The Injustice of Tolerating Slavery in England*, which so much impressed the plaintiff's attorneys that they abandoned the suit.

The Ordnance Clerk had found his vocation. He made up his mind to free all the slaves in England, and to accomplish this he was prepared to teach the lawyers law. This is not an impossible task in a country which has no code and where precedents may be forgotten, as Justice Holt's appears to have been in this case. More instances of slaves being kidnapped called for Sharp's interference, and they were released, but always upon



some legal quibble. "One of these cases," says Clarkson, "was singular. The vessel on which a poor African had been dragged and confined, had reached the Downs, and had actually got under weigh for the West Indies; in two or three hours she would have been out of sight; but just at this moment the writ of *habeas corpus* was carried on board. The officer who served it on the captain saw the miserable African chained to the mainmast, bathed in tears and casting a last mournful glance at the land of freedom which was fast receding from his sight. The captain, on receiving the writ, became outrageous, but, knowing the serious consequences of resisting the law of the land, he gave up his prisoner, whom the officer carried safe, but now crying for joy, to the shore."

No small disquietude was occasioned by the legal amateur's action among the West Indian proprietors in London and among the occupants of the Bench. A suspicion grew in legal circles that he might be right. Fretfully, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, releasing an escaped negro on a side issue, reminded counsel that one day these actions, if pursued, might result in depriving all the slave-holders in England of their property. His lordship had a curious conscience, even for a lawyer—he wanted that which he believed to be unlawful to continue. But the main issue was forced in the year 1772. A negro named *Summerset*, brought from the islands, was claimed by one, *Stewart*, as his slave. In vain the judge hinted that by freeing the black the plaintiff might evade a far-reaching and disastrous result. Like two bulldogs, both *Sharp* and *Stewart* had their teeth in the negro, and neither would let go. On June 22nd, 1772, Lord Mansfield, who was far from relishing the magnifi-

cent part assigned him by fate, pronounced his memorable judgment. The concluding words were: "The state of slavery is of such a nature that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, but only by positive law. It is so odious that nothing can be suffered to support it but positive law. Whatever inconveniences, therefore, may follow from the decision, I cannot say the case is allowed or approved by the law of England; and, therefore, the black must be discharged."<sup>1</sup>

Granville Sharp was not in court when this momentous decision was torn from the legal conscience. He was informed of it by Summerset. Nor does it appear to have excited very much public interest. Even at the highest estimate the number of blacks directly affected amounted to only an inconsiderable fraction of the total population, and the "rights" of the slave-owners in other parts of the British dominions were not at the moment threatened. But presently the liberator found himself faced with the consequences of his quixotism. The good news filtered at last, though slowly, through the thick-skull of the African. Increasing numbers of black servants left their masters' houses and, finding it impossible to earn a living in London, drifted into the workhouses. The poor law authorities became restive under the burden of this new sort of pauper. Sharp saw that he must provide for the creatures he had enfranchised. Already, upon the outbreak of the American war, he had given up his appointment under the Ordnance, rather than supply arms to kill the insurgents, and had thrown himself upon the charity of his brothers—a step which

<sup>1</sup> In 1827 Lord Stowell ruled that a slave, became once more a slave on being taken back from England to a country where slavery was a legal status. Generally speaking, in law and theology, lay a bias against the slave.

these gentlemen cordially approved, promising to maintain him so long as he devoted himself to philanthropic enterprise. The British government had now accepted responsibility for a number of negroes on the American mainland, emancipated by the treason of their owners. With these and the London blacks, Sharp and his associates resolved to form a colony at Sierra Leone, on the west coast of Africa. The first batch of colonists sailed on February 22nd, 1787, among them being some white undesirables and sixty unhappy white prostitutes who, it was hoped, would make suitable wives for the emigrants. Ill fortune attended the ill-considered venture from the start. The miscellaneous members of the expedition could not work together, they died like flies, they were attacked by neighbouring chiefs, and, in 1794, by a French warship. Yet, strange to say, the settlement did survive and became, in the year 1808, a crown colony.

Since it was now held that slavery was a condition unknown to English law, two members of parliament, David Hartley and Sir George Saville, in 1776, moved in the House of Commons that the slave trade was also contrary to the laws of God and the rights of man. Nothing came of the motion, the Commons never having shown themselves in a hurry to do right or redress a wrong; but Hartley's action may have discouraged the slave-owners from proceeding with a bill to reverse Mansfield's decision. Sharp's campaign for the rights of man met with the warm support of the Quakers, who, in 1761, had finally determined to exclude from membership all who had any concern with slavery or the slave trade. On behalf of the Society of Friends, Sir Cecil

Wray, in 1783, presented a petition to Parliament, praying for the prohibition of the trade in human beings. The motion was seconded by Lord North, but ordered to lie upon the table. Two years later it was the citizens of Bridgwater who sent up a similar petition. By this time the House was annoyed, and contemptuously ignored the petition. Already, West Indian planters were asking politicians to check this new moral fervour which threatened the most important vested interests.

But the torch now lit could not be extinguished. It was taken from the hands of Granville Sharp by a new and valuable ally. In 1785, Peckard, vice-chancellor of Cambridge University, proposed the question: "Is it lawful to enslave our fellow-men?" as subject for a prize essay. The prize was won by Thomas Clarkson (born 1760), a sizar at St. John's, who had been educated first at his father's grammar school at Wisbech and subsequently at St. Paul's, London. He answered the question with a decided negative, and was so carried away by his own arguments that he too resolved to consecrate his life to the cause of the slave. Coming to London he got in touch with Sharp and with other sympathisers. On May 22nd, 1785, the first committee for the abolition of the slave trade was constituted. The members were: Clarkson, Sharp, William Dillwyn, Samuel Hoare, George Harris, John Lloyd, James Woods, Richard Phillips, John Bate, Joseph Hooper, James Phillips and Philip Sansom—all Quakers, except Clarkson, Sharp and Sansom. Although he took the chair, Sharp did not take a very active part in the proceedings of the committee. He was busy with his Sierra Leone project. Moreover, it was to him a bitter disappointment that the

committee should have decided to limit its efforts to the suppression of the slave trade instead of attacking the whole institution of slavery. Nevertheless, the committee was right. The slaves in the West Indies had been declared real estate, and the English are very suspicious of assaults upon people's real estate, no matter how acquired or how used. And Granville Sharp, a man with a Latin's attachment to a principle of abstract justice, was far from being the best advocate of the slave's interests before an English audience.

Clarkson, on the other hand, was obscure and without influence. He wanted a mouthpiece in Parliament and found it in William Wilberforce, a young man of great personal charm and ample wealth, and the friend of Pitt. Wilberforce, though not yet recognised as the keeper of the nation's conscience, had earned widespread respect by his insistence on Sabbath observance and by those attacks on "vice" which have so often diverted attention from wickedness. Conversations with Ramsay, the clergyman of St. Kitts, already quoted, with Newton, a Liverpool slave-captain turned parson, and above all with Lady Middleton, turned his attention to the real evil of slavery. "At length," he says, "I well remember after a conversation at Holwood, just above the steep descent into the vale of Keston, I resolved to give notice on the first occasion in the House of Commons of my intention to bring the subject forward." Having been introduced to Clarkson and being told of the formation of the committee, Wilberforce agreed to take charge of the cause in Parliament.

The spade work was done by Clarkson. He it was who penetrated, not without risk to himself, into the citadels

of the trade—Bristol and Liverpool. He admits he approached the western city not without trepidation. When his mission became known, ferocious looks were directed at him in the streets, and in Liverpool, he was asked by the inn-keeper to seek accommodation elsewhere. Next to the slaves, those who suffered most in the slave trade were the sailors employed in it. They were indeed the dregs of the seaport population, and the skippers treated them as men who could find no other means of livelihood. Clarkson's sympathies embraced white as warmly as black, and he knew that Englishmen who cared not at all for the wrongs of the latter might be goaded into action by the wrongs done to the former. On enquiry, he heard of many brutal outrages perpetrated on the miserable seamen. To get positive evidence was exceedingly difficult. The victims themselves found it politic to keep their mouths shut. At Bristol, the liberator found a courageous helper in Alexander Falconbridge, a ship's surgeon. He was told that there was only one captain in the trade who did not deserve to have been hanged long ago. With the indomitable patience which afterwards led him to board no fewer than fifty-seven ships in order to find a witness, Clarkson collected enough evidence to charge a mate with brutality to a seaman. Prominent slave merchants sat next the magistrates. It was only when Clarkson boldly reminded them that he knew of a higher court which could compel them to do their duty that he could secure a committal. His efforts were vain. The case was remitted to London, but the witnesses were mysteriously spirited away and the mate was discharged by the Grand Jury.

At Liverpool the abolitionist's reception was definitely

hostile. Here he was shocked to see exposed for sale, thumbscrews, fetters and other articles indispensable to the slave-trader. After a visit to Manchester where he aroused a wide measure of sympathy, he returned to London with a mass of evidence which he laid before Wilberforce.

Pitt and Grenville were profoundly impressed by these revelations. Their publication resulted in the adhesion of numerous members of Parliament, bishops and divines, among these Paley. John Wesley and Porteus, the Sabatarian bishop of London, had long ago declared against the slave trade. Public opinion was in a ferment. On February 11th, 1788, the King, who at that time was not unsympathetic towards the cause, commanded an enquiry by the Privy Council.

At this and the subsequent enquiry by a committee of the House of Commons in 1791, the opponents and the partisans of slavery developed their case. Though the abolitionists declared they aimed only at the suppression of the slave trade, they took care to pour a flood of light upon the conditions under which the slave lived in the British colonies. It was the certainty that the existence of the institution was threatened which strengthened the slave-owners' opposition to the preliminary measure, though they were at great pains to prove the slave trade indispensable. The traffic found defenders in the Royal Navy, for which the slaving fleet was considered a valuable recruiting ground. Admiral after admiral, from Rodney and St. Vincent down to the Duke of Clarence (afterwards William IV) and Lord Shuldhham pronounced the African trade to be most profitable to the nation and the source of England's maritime great-

ness. Unquestionably, the seamen who survived the hardships of the Middle Passage should have been well seasoned when carried off by the press-gangs to serve on a king's ship, or when they chose of their own free will to seek refuge on one. An instance was cited of a slave ship losing fifty-one out of a crew of seventy-five in a ten months' voyage. Witnesses deposed to the debilitated condition of the seamen on reaching the West Indies. A curious story was told by Dr. Thomas Trotter, a ship's surgeon. The notorious Captain Noble lost twelve parakeets on a voyage and suspecting this to be the fault of one of the sailors, had the man lashed to a topmast for twelve days, during which time he was given no other subsistence than one of the dead birds and a pint of water a day. The man, strangely enough, survived and was discharged in the West Indies. "Captain Noble (it was alleged) boasted of his ruthlessness to a number of his fellows, who applauded his invention for the novelty of his punishment." Seamen were often reduced in the West Indies to so wretched a condition that the very slaves took pity on them. Every effort was made, of course, by the friends of the trade, who were strongly represented on both committees, to discredit the witnesses, some of whom undoubtedly had personal grudges against the shipmasters; but at this time of day, no one is inclined to credit men who passed their lives stealing men and selling them, with an excess of the milk of human kindness.

The charge that they stole men, the slavers hotly and tenaciously rebutted. We are familiar with their arguments, as recited half a century before by Snelgrave—the blacks they took were already slaves, according to



the laws of their own country—if not sold to the slavers, they would be put to death—they were better off as slaves to the white man than they were in Africa—and so forth. These contentions would have been easily disposed of, if members of the committees had been capable of hearing the evidence with an open mind.

That the spokesmen of Liverpool and Bristol who were the actual vendors of black flesh should defend the traffic by which they lived can excite no surprise. The determined opposition of the buyers or planters was not so easily explained and seems to have puzzled the home government. Plain men asked why the stock of slaves could not be kept up by natural increase, reflecting also that the value of the slaves ought to rise if further importations were forbidden. The question put the planter in a cleft stick. If the West Indian negroes dwelt in idyllic conditions, as was frequently maintained, it was hard to explain why they did not multiply. In Grenada during a five years' stoppage of imports due to war, the number of slaves dropped from 31,000 to 28,000. In other islands, a decrease of three per cent. annually was admitted. Infant mortality amounted to nearly fifty per cent. This was attributed to a disease called "jaw-fall" (lockjaw) and to the neglect by the mothers. Some said the negresses did not suckle their children long enough, others said they deliberately prolonged the period of lactation as a safeguard against another pregnancy. The black woman did not want to have young, it was constantly asserted, she was addicted to prostitution and every kind of vice. Of course, more men than women were imported—naturally, the planter preferred an able-bodied male labourer; but in any case, women were

harder to get, the native chiefs not parting with them so readily as with men, who were for the most part criminals, etc., etc. At last, very diffidently, some one reported he had heard it whispered that some planters said it paid them better to work a slave to death than to make him breed and keep him in his old age. This was merely a whisper, of course. . . . The plain truth of it is, the slaves were worked to death, and the greater the output of sugar the greater was the mortality among them.

The slave trade and the institution of slavery were hard things to defend even before a sympathetic jury. Well, yes, it was the fact that in Barbados, the killing of a slave was only punishable by a fine. "Strictly speaking, a slave can have no property." "No, the chastity of the negro woman is not protected by law." These were damaging admissions. When the Dean of Middleham praised certain planters for the humane treatment of their slaves, he was asked if he had any reason to suppose that such humane conduct was not characteristic of all the gentlemen of the island. "I am here to speak to what I know," was the curt answer, "not to what I do not know." Later on his deanship created a breeze by quoting Locke as saying he could not understand how any gentleman could defend slavery. An angry member of the committee, probably a slave-owner himself, demanded this passage should be struck out of the report. After a debate, it was decided that it should not be struck out; and it remains for all folk to see.<sup>1</sup>

Against the philosopher, the trade set up the theologian. Harris, a Jesuit resident in Liverpool, put his pen at the disposal of the slave merchants, and was able with-

<sup>1</sup> And to reconcile with Locke's *Constitution of Carolina*, see p. 164.

out the least difficulty or casuistry, to prove that slavery was sanctioned by what he called holy writ. So much the worse for holy writ! It does not appear that his arguments stifled the British conscience, for the House of Commons was inundated by abolitionist petitions. The agitation had spread to the continent where the "philosophers" had long pronounced in favour of emancipation. Condorcet, La Rochefoucauld, and La Fayette all came out on the side of humanity. Louis XVI, asked to dissolve a society for abolition, said he was very glad to hear such a society had been formed among Frenchmen. In 1792, Denmark, first among the nations, declared the slave trade illegal.

While Pitt moved that Parliament should take the conditions of the traffic into consideration, and Fox countered by demanding that it should not be regulated but destroyed, Sir William Dolben brought in a bill to mitigate the horrors of the Middle Passage by limiting the number of slaves to five per ton in the case of vessels under 150 tons burthen and to three in the case of larger vessels. This bill passed in the teeth of fierce opposition in both houses, directed in the Lords by Chancellor Thurlow. In 1789, Wilberforce who had recovered from a long illness, returned to the fray and on May 12th moved twelve resolutions based on the Privy Council report. These were carried without a division, but further action was postponed to the next session.

But now the cause of freedom suffered a severe setback. The progress of the revolution in France, in which men perceived the application of the doctrine of the rights of man, alarmed the conservative elements always so strong in this country. Their fears were heightened by the

negro uprising in Haiti, which was due to the French government's having broken faith with the slaves and having rescinded a decree of emancipation, but which was triumphantly pointed to by the pro-slavers as the inevitable consequence of interfering with the institution. George III became frightened and withdrew his support. Fervent abolitionists countered by boycotting West Indian sugar. Pitt found himself faced with a division in his own cabinet and would not adopt Wilberforce's proposals as a government measure. Nevertheless, on April 2nd, 1792, he spoke on his side "with such eloquence that for the last twenty minutes he seemed to be really inspired." A motion for the gradual abolition of the slave trade, to be accomplished by 1796, was carried by 238 to 85 votes. The slavers clamoured to be heard at the bar of the Lords, and so far prevailed with their lordships that the bill was thrown out. In the year which should have witnessed the final extinction of the traffic so far as England was concerned, the bill was rejected in the Commons by only seventy-four against seventy votes. Enough of his supporters to have carried the measure, Wilberforce bitterly complained, were absent that night at a performance of *The Two Hunchbacks*. Their abstention was probably deliberate. The support given to the anti-slavery movement in Parliament was to a great extent merely platonic, like that given in after years to the demand for women's suffrage. As usual a great many members shrank from the application of their own principles. Others had been suborned or half convinced by the enormously powerful West India Committee, which, as was admitted in the 'thirties of the succeeding century, was able in the unreformed

House to secure direct representation by buying rotten boroughs.

The times were not favourable for the discussion of domestic or philanthropic reforms. It is, therefore, the more creditable to Englishmen that amid the clash of arms and the alarums and excursions of the Napoleonic epoch, the interests of the most helpless and wretched of the human species continued to be remembered. The dawn of the new century brought an infusion of fresh blood into the abolitionist movement in the persons of Henry Brougham (afterwards chancellor), Zachary Macaulay, father of the historian, and James Stephen, the most implacable enemy slavery ever had. Clarkson had not relaxed his activities and had kept the national conscience awake. Encouraged by the addition of the Irish members to the House of Commons, Wilberforce threw himself once more into the fray. On March 30th, 1804, he asked leave to renew the bill for suppressing the slave trade within a specified time. The following year there were seventy ayes and seventy-seven noes. The Irish members disappointed the hopes formed of them. The royal family was divided on the question. The Duke of Gloucester was on the side of humanity, William IV, that was to be, and his brother Sussex, the freemason, loud-voiced in the cause of wrong. When Pitt and Fox died within twelve months of each other, the flesh merchants may have congratulated themselves that the hopes of the slave were confined with them.

But the British people were better men, as they generally are than their nominal representatives. The House of Lords as sometimes happens, had its ear better attuned than the professedly popular assembly to the sentiments

of the nation. It was in the upper chamber in the year 1807 that Lord Grenville carried his bill for the suppression of the slave trade. Upon its passage, Lord St. Vincent walked out of the chamber, predicting the ruin of the commonwealth. On February 10th, the last fight began in the Commons. For the second reading, there were 283 ayes and 16 noes. Romilly pointed to Wilberforce as that honoured man who would that night lay his head on his pillow with the knowledge that the slave trade was no more. The young Earl Percy, backed by Sheridan, demanded the abolition of slavery itself, but was persuaded by Wilberforce to let his motion drop. The third reading passed without a division. The bill enacted that no vessel should clear from any British port for slaves after May 1st, 1807, and that no slave should be landed in any British colony later than March 1st, 1808. In this form the measure was voted by a majority in the Lords, the Duke of Norfolk supporting it and the Earl of Westmoreland strenuously opposing. At the eleventh hour it seemed as though luck as always hitherto would again fail the negro. The ministry resigned. There might be delay about obtaining the royal assent. No; at noon on March 25th, 1807, the seal was attached by commission and the bill for the abolition of the slave trade was law. England had washed her hands of the stain left by John Hawkins.

In Liverpool and Bristol, there was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Pictures were freely drawn of shipping rotting in the river and of the cities' tumbling into ruins. But on a calmer study of the new act, it was found that the penalty provided amounted only to a fine of £100 for every slave carried and the confiscation

of the ship and cargo. The price of slaves had dropped like lead in the ocean upon the report of the abolition reaching the Gold Coast. With tears in his eyes, King Holiday, a dark potentate, represented to Captain Hugh Crow the sad plight of the native rulers who now found themselves obliged to kill their surplus population instead of selling them. It was now calculated that in these circumstances the trade would continue to pay if one venture out of three succeeded. Thoughtful shippers also in many cases registered their vessels under the Portuguese flag. For another three years the smuggling of blacks into the West Indies went on merrily; and then the death-knell was sounded. In 1810, slave trading was made a felony, punishable with transportation, for British subjects everywhere and for foreigners anywhere within the dominions of Britain. In February, 1817, a young man named Bean Hanway, "most respectably connected in the Isle of Wight," was found guilty at the Old Bailey, in spite of the judge's sympathetic summing-up, of selling slaves to a Portuguese on the Calabar coast; but the game was no longer worth the candle. Englishmen forsook the trade in human flesh, and the grass has not yet been observed to grow rankly in the streets of Liverpool and Bristol. The act of 1824, making slave-trading a form of piracy and therefore punishable with death, added nothing to the hangmen's emoluments.

## II.

Whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad. This apparently was done to the West Indian slave-owners. The suppression of a commerce which for

two hundred years had been considered vital to the prosperity of the nation showed plainly enough that the Englishman's conscience was freeing itself from the shackles of Roman law and Hebrew religion. Within fifteen years of Wilberforce's crowning mercy, animals were for the first time in this country accorded a meagre measure of protection, still shamefully insufficient. A hundred felonies ceased to be capital. None protested more vehemently than the planters that nothing less than the emancipation of their slaves was meditated by the abolitionists; yet so far from trying to conciliate public opinion and to mitigate the conditions of bondage, they are revealed by the records of the next twenty-five years in as bad a light as any since the islands were first settled. The abolition of the slave trade seems to have inspired them with that insane and hellish hatred of the black man, not to be found nowadays outside the southern United States; unless we are to infer that barbarity had always been as common but was simply in these later decades made manifest. In a despatch to the Colonial Office, dated September 1st, 1804, Governor Seaforth denounces the barbarous and revolting oppression of the blacks in Barbados and the horrid and atrocious murders of slaves. In Tortola, a notorious plague spot, furious indignation was aroused among the handful of whites by the conviction in 1811 of Arthur Hodges, a member of their council, for having caused the death of sixty slaves. Two years later, a miscreant named Huggins, who was able to intimidate his neighbours by his skill with the pistol, was tried for shooting a negro boy and released on payment of a fine. Moreover, he was allowed to prosecute the Deputy-Marshall for having



arrested him. It is shameful to note the numbers of clergymen of the Church of England implicated in these cases. In the year 1813, the Rev. William Davis of St. Kitts, is acquitted on a charge of murdering his woman slave, Eliza; in 1818, the Rev. William Rawlins is tried for a similar crime; in St. Lucia, the Rev. Beaver. In the same year, Huggins of St. Kitts, a relative of the other scoundrel, is tried and acquitted for having mutilated five slaves, and Walley, a manager, for having ill-treated the slaves on his master, Lord Combermere's estate. In Dominica, in 1823, it is reported that a band of drunken whites have attacked and assaulted a party of free coloured people taking part in a dance, while in Barbados, the negro Cuffey is flogged to death by his master. In Jamaica there flourished a parson named Bridges, a violent opponent of emancipation. In 1829, he was acquitted by a local tribunal upon the charge of brutally maltreating his cook, a slave girl named Kitty Hylton, "because she had cooked his dinner badly"; indicted again upon orders from Whitehall, he was a second time discharged by a sympathetic grand jury of his fellow planters.

Wilberforce had twice declared he did not contemplate emancipation. It may be that for a while, he honestly expected a change of heart in the planters, if on no loftier grounds than that men of sense might be trusted not to abuse property which they could not replace. James Stephen, his brother-in-law, a clerk at the Colonial Office, and the great majority of his fellow workers, knew better. Grimly, they watched the endeavours of the home government to effect a mitigation of slavery which might lead ultimately to its extinction. That end

it is true, was apparently being hastened by the refusal of the slave-holders to promote marriage or family life among their bondmen. The slave population in Jamaica decreased in twelve years by 24,000; in Antigua, between 1805 and 1831, it declined from 36,000 to 29,500. In 1823, Thomas Fowell Buxton, who now took the reins from Wilberforce, moved in the House of Commons that slavery was repugnant to the principles of the British constitution and the Christian religion and ought to be abolished. But he had not the courage to demand immediate emancipation. He wanted all slaves born after a certain date to be free and educated for freedom at the expense of the state. Canning, now prime minister, agreed that the progeny of slaves should not be eternally slaves, and promised to recommend reforms to the island legislatures to fit the slave for freedom; upon which, Wilberforce, now disillusioned, observed that if he relied on those bodies, he would be disappointed.

The events of the next ten years abundantly justified the veteran abolitionist's prediction. The planters snapped their fingers at the home government, their petty parliaments obstinately rejected all suggested reforms, they defied their governors, where the governors were not themselves cowed by the pressure of local influence. England is enslaved by her slave colonies, shouted the negro's friends; but the slave-owners also found encouragement in the mother country. William Cobbett, for instance, insisted that sympathy was wasted on the able-bodied negro and ought to be reserved for the down-trodden factory hands and farm-labourers in Britain. But the down-trodden worker in this country could not be flogged by his employer nor hung up on a

gibbet to die of hunger and thirst, neither could he be seized with his wife and children and sold to satisfy his employer's creditors. One is reminded by this mawkish protest of similar dishonest attempts to postpone for ever the relief of animals' sufferings by claiming an eternal priority for the grievances, slight or serious, of every section of mankind.

The planters, like their good friend, Cobbett, regarded the Methodists and other missionaries in the islands with peculiar animosity. The meek Moravians who had been many years at work in the Leeward Islands had confined themselves to teaching the slave to pray and not to steal and to be obedient to his master; but the disciples of Wesley, it was believed, had put it into the head of the negro that he was a man and not a beast, and had fomented the movement for abolition and emancipation. The activities of evangelical missionaries among undeveloped races have always come in for a good deal of hostile criticism. To the present writer it seems that they often merely substitute one form of superstition for another, and that by insisting on their curious sexual taboos, they lessen mankind's occasions of happiness. No doubt the sexual license and the desecration of the Sunday resulting from slavery, offended many of them more than the fact of slavery itself. But in common with the Roman Catholics, they did protest that a Christian was a Christian, whatever might be his colour, and was therefore entitled to the advantages conferred by the Christian code. From them, the slaves first heard rumours of the efforts being made over the water for their liberation. Shortly after Canning's speech messages were read to the colonial assemblies, specifying the reforms

expected of them. Foremost of these were the prohibition of the flogging of women and the acceptance of slaves' testimony in courts of law. In Demerara, the slave toiled under conditions bequeathed by his former Dutch masters which were worse even than those of Barbados. So reluctantly did the local assembly, known as the Court of Policy, consent to these indispensable measures that Murray, the governor, another slaveholder, delayed promulgating them. His timidity had disastrous results. Conscious that their rights were being withheld from them, the slaves murmured. The slave trade was at an end, their countrymen could no longer be bought and sold in Africa, but here under the British crown, it was announced that upon the breaking up of several estates, some four score negroes were to be put up to auction. In spite of the opposition of their masters, a number of the slaves had been baptized and converted by a missionary named Smith. They rallied round his chapel and refusing to listen to his counsels, they seized their cane-knives or cutlasses and clamoured for their freedom. Murray proclaimed martial law and called out the troops and local militia. As was usual with the blacks, their insurgence amounted to little more than a strike. They damaged a good deal of property and satisfied their resentment by putting their masters, when they could find them, in the stocks. Only three overseers were killed. Their moderation profited the insurgents not at all. They were shot down and butchered by the whites, and executed by the hundred. Then the victors turned savagely on the missionary Smith, whom they held to be the instigator of the outbreak. He was sentenced to death by court-martial. "But the men who had

the courage to condemn were afraid to carry the sentence into execution; and proceedings were suspended till his majesty's determination on the case should be known. In the meantime, Smith was subjected to the closest imprisonment, the miseries of which were increased by much unnecessary severity. A disorder under which he laboured when he was first deprived of liberty went on aggravating, and he was rescued by the hand of death before the news arrived that his majesty had rescinded the sentence of the court-martial."<sup>1</sup> Furious that their prey should have escaped them, the planters of Demerara tore down the fence which the murdered man's widow was setting up round his grave. At a meeting they presumed to censure the Colonial Secretary, Earl Bathurst, for having advised the King to quash the sentence.

This violence did not help the cause of slavery in Britain. Canning was spurred to further action by six hundred petitions. Fawning before the Bumbledom of Jamaica and Barbados, he found it in him to take a stronger line with the Crown Colonies. In Trinidad, in the teeth of the British planters, he revived what was practically the mild old Spanish code. St. Lucia, snarling, had to extend the same limited measures of protection to her slaves. The self-governing colonies shouted defiance and flouted despatch after despatch from the Colonial Office. Forgo the flogging of our black women?—never! yelled the genial West Indian whites, the hospitable entertainers of Marryat and Michael Scott. They were unmoved by the arrival of a bishop, to preside over the newly-created Anglican see. Everywhere "unrest among the negroes" was reported. An "insurrection" in which

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1824.

the casualties were seven horses and three mules was made an excuse for wholesale executions. While the Jews, devoted to the slave-owning interest, were enfranchised—a step which must have momentarily disgusted Cobbett with his sugar-growers—the coloured population, who were two-thirds white and the offspring of the planters, had to wait for the rights of citizenship till 1830.

But the ministers of the crown continued to temporize, pleading with the insular assemblies for their own sake to make concessions to the outraged conscience of the mother country. It was forgotten that for nearly two centuries, the older colonies had been allowed to go their own way, with practically no interference from the crown, and that they had conceived, in consequence, an idea of their power and importance, which in the case of Barbados, at any rate, struck strangers as ludicrous. By force, they ruled their blacks, and they would not believe that force could be applied to themselves. Appeals to their sense of justice were equally misplaced. Eight generations had been taught by law and religion to look on the blacks as mere chattels, without rights in this world or the next. They had been used to the sight of slaves roasting at the stake and hanging from a gibbet to starve to death; from their earliest childhood, they had heard the crack of the whip and the screams of the black men and women. This fuss about the slaves must have seemed as idle to many of them as protests against the horrors of the laboratory and the slaughter-house sound in the ears of many politicians to-day. Moreover, it threatened their racial supremacy. By this time, in the larger islands, apart from the land-owners, a fairly

numerous white population had grown up, composed of craftsmen, traders, factors and salaried persons. Colour prejudice is always strongest in those conscious of their individual or social inferiority, and these people cried out loudest against the negroes. Their clamour emboldened the planters in their local legislatures and deafened the absentee proprietors in England to the warnings of ministers.

The progress of the colonies in the way of reform, said Brougham in 1828, was so slow as to be imperceptible to any eyes but their own. Certainly, very little had been achieved by counsel. In the Bahamas and St. Vincent, the marriage of slaves was recognized, but the compulsory manumission of the slave upon his offering a price for himself had been refused everywhere, except, strange to say, in St. Kitts, where furthermore, women had been exempted from the penalty of the lash. The planters of Tobago, while they formally declined to take advice from Whitehall, carried out a programme of their own, which included even the admission of a slave's testimony against his master. This wise and dignified policy was not imitated in Jamaica and Barbados. The assemblies in both islands rejected their governor's proposals, declared that under the existing conditions of unrest, any reforms would endanger public tranquillity, and either refused to do anything or drafted laws which were found unacceptable by the crown.

Even Eldon, the arch-enemy of all that was liberal, progressive and humane, stood up in the House of Lords and vowed it was time to finish with slavery. But still the planters would not listen. The cry was raised, "England is enslaved by her slave colonies." Unable to withstand

the tide of indignation which was ever rising higher in this country, ministers in 1829 drafted a new order in council reducing the hours of slave labour. The time for this reform was ill-chosen. The planters were not unaware of the conditions of labour in England. If the Lancashire factory owner could exact twelve hours' work from children under sixteen, why shouldn't the West Indian proprietor be allowed to exact more than nine hours from a full-grown, able-bodied negro? The retort was just. No community can afford to do justice with one hand and withhold it with the other.

Compelled to obey, the planters of Jamaica meanly vented their spite on the slaves by cutting down their Christmas holidays. A rumour spread among the blacks that while the king over the water wanted to free them, their masters were plotting to kill their men and seize their women. To allay the turmoil, the Governor, Lord Belmore, on December 22nd, 1831, most unwisely issued a proclamation contradicting the report of an impending emancipation. In their despair, the blacks mutinied. They found a leader in Samuel Sharpe, a negro of intelligence and a zealous Baptist convert. Seizing what poor weapons that lay ready to their hands, the afflicted people ranged over a few parishes, doing considerable damage to the property they had created, but shrinking as ever from shedding the blood of their odious taskmasters. Numbers, as usual, gave way to superior discipline and arms of precision. The rising was crushed and crushed with that ferocity which has so long characterised the treatment of black by white. Over a hundred mutineers were put to death by sentence of courts-martial which were themselves of doubtful legality. The



whites insisted that the missionaries were at the bottom of it all. A mob of militiamen, flown with rum and victory, pulled down the "pestilential preaching-shop" of a Wesleyan pastor named Knibb. In the intervals of thrashing his black girls, the Rev. W. R. Bridges found time to organise a body called the Colonial Church Union, to put a stop to the preaching of the Gospel "by divers ill-educated and unqualified persons." But the free coloured people of Jamaica had by this time been enfranchised, and they showed their teeth when the whites talked openly of transferring their allegiance from the Union Jack to the Stars and Stripes. In the nostrils of the mulattos, the very name America stank.

Knibb, sent for by his superiors, on landing in England, learned that the Reform Bill had passed into law. "Thank God," he said. "Now I'll have slavery down." To accomplish that, he was ready to tramp barefoot through every parish in England. He was not called on to walk so far. The new Government of Earl Grey could not afford to flout abolitionist opinion, which had been mainly on the side of parliamentary reform. But it seems to have been only under the threat of immediate action by Fowell Buxton, that the ministry seriously applied themselves to making an end of slavery. By English statesmen, a gradual method was, of course, favoured. On May 14th, 1833, Stanley, the Secretary for the Colonies, told the House of Commons that the time had come to carry out the pledges given by former Governments for the gradual extinction of slavery. The colonial legislatures, he said, had shown no disposition to respect the wishes of the mother country. Their attitude was an insolent mockery. Counsels and remonstrances had been

of no avail. It was proposed now to free at once every slave under the age of six or born after the passing of the Act. As regards the remainder, a scheme which has been called ingenious and which was certainly intricate, was unfolded. They were to be turned into indentured labourers. For three-quarters of their time, for a term of years, they were to serve their present owners in return for the board, lodging and clothing they were accustomed to receive. The owner having been required to set a price on the slave, he would credit him for the remaining portion of his time with such a wage as would enable him to pay off that sum and buy his freedom at the end of twelve years. Presumably, the planter would be restrained from cutting down wages by setting too low a price on his slave by the fear he might get correspondingly less when it came to compensation, though Stanley at first suggested this should take the form of no more than a loan of fifteen millions. The aggregate value of the slaves in the West Indian possessions was estimated at twice that amount. To meet the objections of both the friends and owners of the slaves, the Government promised to convert the loan into a free gift of twenty millions on condition that the slaves should actually be paid the wages accruing to them. The resolutions were adopted by 324 votes to 42.

The bill on these lines was drafted between Saturday and Monday by Mr. "Over-secretary" Stephen, an effort which resulted in the breakdown of his health. The term of apprenticeship was reduced in the case of the "predials" or field workers to six years and in the case of other ex-slaves to four. Replying to the criticisms of the disappointed abolitionists, the Colonial Secretary

claimed that the measure would at least obliterate the status of slavery. The negro could no longer be bought and sold, he had all the civil rights of a man, and could dispose of his time and labour outside the conditions of his apprenticeship. But, like the English apprentice, he could be haled before the justices if he broke his indentures, a point which was not likely to be overlooked by the masters; and to them represented by the colonial assemblies, the adjustment of many important details was most unwisely left. As a check upon these gentry, however, a hundred stipendiary magistrates were to be appointed by the crown. The compensation fund was to be administered by commissioners, subject to the excellent proviso that no money was to be paid till the Act had been put in force in the colony affected. The bill became law on August 29th, 1833, and was to take effect on the following August 1st. It is pleasing to reflect that it was signed by William IV who had formerly been a determined advocate of slavery; more pleasing, still, it is that Wilberforce, sinking to his grave, lived long enough to learn of its second reading and assured success.

The island assemblies swallowed the richly gilded pill some with a scowl, some with a grimace, some with a smile. Antigua, with singular good grace and sagacity, waived aside the apprenticeship and, with the consent of the Colonial Office, abolished slavery altogether. On August 1st, 1834, certainly the most glorious day in British annals, the blacks who, it had been predicted, would turn and rend their enslavers, thronged the churches and chapels, thanking the white man's God for at last remembering them. They were free—some of them aged folk who had never conceived of themselves

as anything but beasts of burden, who had borne children in slavery to see them die perhaps under the driver's lash; they were free—many of them children who would never feel the lash which had scarred their mothers' backs for the rest of their lives; they were free—some of them young men with the white man's blood in their veins, who saw now the wide world open before them. Thanking God, they remembered, let us hope, Wilberforce, Clarkson, Sharp, all the devoted men across the water, who had not forgotten them as they sat in bondage and who had in the language of their preachers, brought them out of the Land of Egypt. From the happy crowds, gaily dressed, who thronged the streets of the island capital, that Saturday in August, proceeded not one word of reproach or a single threat against the people who had fattened on their blood, who had hung up their fellows in chains to perish of hunger and thirst. But here and there, maybe, some gave a thought to the myriad dead in their nameless graves who had lived too long and died too soon.

A long way off, Bermuda spontaneously freed her slaves, "who had indeed been fostered under the eyes of their owners and formed a part of their respective families." The negroes of St. Kitts heard the clank of falling fetters and to the number of nineteen thousand demanded to be set free at once. In vain, the lieutenant-governor patiently explained to them that though not to be slaves after August 1st, they could still be compelled to work by their present owners. On what was equivocally termed Emancipation Day, they refused their labour. Martial law was proclaimed, and on November 18th, the governor was able to announce that the

apprenticeship system had been enforced with good results.

The like success and good order attended the transformation of the slave into the indentured labourer in British Guiana where memories of shameful ill treatment and bad faith on the part of the ruling race were still recent.

A different story is to be told of Barbados and Jamaica. There, the emancipation of the slave in any shape or form was conceded only lest worse things should happen. Even before the bill was finally drafted, the planters sat down to consider how its provisions might be evaded or whittled down and slavery perpetuated under the style of apprenticeship. Happily, Sir Lionel Smith, who took office as governor of Barbados, in 1833, unlike so many of his predecessors, was undaunted by the sullen opposition of the Assembly. The slaves were emancipated, but the governor, insisting that the cultivation of industrious habits by the negroes was as essential to their own happiness as to the rights of their late owners, was misled into sanctioning a system of task work on "such a scale as the strongest negroes could not work upon for a twelve-month together." Upon his departure to assume the government of Jamaica, he was hooted by the negroes and regretted by the planters; but he had at least set the enfranchised blacks firmly in the path of freedom.

Dr. R. L. Madden, one of the stipendiary magistrates sent out from England, to watch over the execution of the Act, observed that the planters of Jamaica were not using the eleven months' respite accorded them to replace manual labour by machinery. He cannot have failed, moreover, to notice the very unwilling spirit in which

they prepared to assist in the evolution of the slave. As the day of emancipation drew nearer, they declared in the Assembly that they had conformed to the law against their better judgment, and by limiting the term of their own bill for carrying out the recommendations of the home Government to eighteen months, they might have been taken to cherish the hope of presently returning upon it. The blacks, under the cold looks of their late tyrants, celebrated the day of liberation in much the same fashion as their fellows of Antigua. On August 1st, 1834, writes Dr. Madden, "not a single riot occurred throughout the island, and not a single man, woman or child was butchered to make a negro holiday." All the dissenting places of worship were thronged with black people, but no services were solemnised in the Anglican churches. The Church of England having for nearly two hundred years ignored the negroes and having tacitly connived at their enslavement, could hardly with decency pretend to rejoice in their good fortune. The dissenting clergy took great pains to explain to their flocks the nature of the change that had come about and to exhort them to diligence. There was no disorder and no drunkenness, nor any great appearance of exultation, "except in the subdued form of grateful piety." But some dinners and dances were given by the negroes to mark the occasion, and one such function, it is pleasing to record, was attended by a British general and his staff.

For the most part, then, the negroes went cheerfully back to work, their eyes fixed on the faint star of freedom twinkling some six years afar. They soon found that though they were no longer slaves, the planters of Jamaica remained slave-drivers. The governor, Lord

Sligo, had proclaimed an amnesty to all runaway slaves who should surrender on or before August 1st; with a meanness not to be believed of any other class of men, the planters took advantage of this to gratify their spite against all negroes by flogging those who returned before the actual hour of emancipation and were, therefore, within the strict letter of the law, still their slaves. Of the British West Indian planter, it may be said he went down with the whip nailed to his masthead, amid the screams of his victims, men and women, and muttering execrations against the flag which had so long protected him and his unholy commerce. The clause apportioning the apprentice's time had been badly drafted, as most English Acts of Parliament are, or it left too much to the discretion of the planters. They naturally used their discretion in their own interests, so as to deprive their workers of their full week-ends. They found a lawyer mean enough to advise them, as one always can find a lawyer, that they could withdraw a number of the allowances which the home Government had intended they should continue. They discovered a hundred ways of vexing and disappointing the poor people who had given them the greater part of their lives for nothing, and who now asked only to be suffered to work out their freedom for a miserable pittance. "Disabled men and women, some with one arm or one leg, were forced to work in the field, and compensation was claimed even for the loss of time in childbirth." And if the crack of the whip was no longer heard in the fields, it was heard all day in the gaols, to which the idle or recalcitrant apprentice was committed by the planter magistrate to oblige his brother planter. Everything was done, and very skilfully done, to thwart the stipendiaries

from England, whom a native paper styled the Thirty Tyrants. Dr. Madden was insulted on the bench and assaulted in the street by a Jew named Pacifico. (Possibly, this Hebrew was related to the British citizen of the same name, to redress whose wrongs Lord Palmerston threatened a small state with war some years later.) "In a word," wrote the disgusted magistrate, "in the present system, there is no security for the negro's rights."

Sir Lionel Smith, on taking the reins of government from the Marquis of Sligo, in consequence, became first of all aware of serious unrest in certain parts of the island. This he seemed likely to foment by his injudicious support of the ex-slave-owners and by censuring the special magistrates for their zeal. By the end of 1837, he saw more clearly. The blacks, he admitted, were worse off than they had been as slaves. This had been for several months known to the Anti-Slavery Society. Their agents, Joseph Sturge and Harvey, had been investigating the conditions of indentured labour in Jamaica and Antigua, while their colleagues, Lloyd and Scoble, observed what was going on behind the scenes in Demerara. Sturge, a corn merchant of Birmingham, returning home, related in that city at a great public meeting what he had seen. A black apprentice named Williams was seven times flogged in the course of two and a half years, was three times thrown into a filthy cell on the plantation, and four times sentenced to the treadmill—all this on charges of mere disobedience or insolence of manner. Birmingham seethed with indignation. Primed with information by Sturge, on January 29th, 1838, Lord Brougham, that fiery, chivalrous lawyer—one of the best men who ever sat on the woolsack—denounced the



apprenticeship system in the upper chamber. The blacks, he declared, were worked harder than ever and stinted in food. They were the victims of partial tribunals and excessive and illegal punishments. Eleven women were flogged in a gaol and then put on the treadmill. When faint and about to fall off they were suspended by the arms, so that the wheel at every revolution bruised their legs. As a result of their injuries, they died. A Jamaica coroner's jury found they died by the visitation of God.

Brougham's resolution to terminate the apprenticeship was defeated in a thin House. Ministers and London Society, preoccupied by the young queen's approaching coronation, were bored by the whole question, and thought that since the negroes had endured this and worse treatment so long, they might wait patiently for the expiry of the prescribed seven years. Wearily, the Government admitted that something should be done. An amending Act was passed on April 11th, under which flogging was practically forbidden and women could not be condemned to the treadmill. Powers were given to the governors to deal with the other abuses charged. This bill was passed over the head of Sir George Strickland's resolution in favour of immediate abolition; on which occasion the planters were defended by a rising young politician, William Ewart Gladstone, whose heart many years later was melted by the sufferings of the Bulgarians. But the motion was revived on May 22nd, 1838, by Sir Eardley Wilmot and was carried by a snap vote of ninety-six to ninety-three. Before the Cabinet could challenge another division, the result had been communicated to the colonies, to the disgust of the shufflers. "If the House of Commons," rightly

remarks Dr. Mathieson, "could not be said to know its own mind on the subject, the planters at least had to make up theirs."

They had at last the sense to realise that the battle was lost. The whites of Jamaica went mad with rage. They dreamed of getting up an insurrection among the blacks as an excuse for destroying them and the missionaries, wrote Sir Lionel Smith, adding, "I also am to be shot." But when one after the other, Montserrat, Nevis, Tortola, St. Vincent, Barbados, St. Kitts, Tobago and the Bahamas declared the apprenticeship to be at an end and the blacks in fact as well as theoretically free, the Assembly yielded to the advice of the governor and council. It is gratifying to record the humiliation of this body, which next to Barbados, held the world's worst record among legislatures. Yet in the protest which accompanied their surrender the planters had the effrontery to vent their spleen by aspersing the mother country. It was not in Jamaica, they sneered, that men and women exposed their shame in divorce courts and mothers were spurred by a narrow morality into slaying their illegitimate children. No, indeed; the kind-hearted planter was more often disposed to rear the child, which was not seldom his own, with the prospect of selling him at a good price later on.

So, on August 1st, 1838, the slaves became, throughout the dominions of Queen Victoria, free in fact—free to go where they liked and to work for whom they willed. Knibb, a spirited type of minister less common to-day than then in the free churches, was determined not to let so momentous an event pass off like a mere public holiday. At his pestilential preaching-shop, which the

bloods of Jamaica had had to re-build at their own expense by order of an unsympathetic Government, he held a Watchnight Service on July 31st. As the hands of the clock crept towards twelve, he cried, "The hour is at hand—the monster is dying!" As the last stroke of midnight died away, he announced, "The monster is dead—the negro is free!" From the assembled blacks went up a mighty shout, which was followed by three cheers for the Queen.

The next morning, slavery was solemnly buried in the form of a coffin filled with a chain, a whip and shackles. In every place of worship, the thankful people prayed. Their cabins were decorated. Displaying banners in honour of the Queen, of the great liberators, and the good governors, a procession of seven thousand negroes was addressed by Sir Lionel Smith. They took the horses out of his carriage and dragged it through the streets, cheering for "their governor, father and friend." Never had the bright West Indian sun risen on a more glorious day.

With the efforts of the free man of colour to wrest a living wage from his erstwhile enslavers—with the planters' campaign of meanness and petty exaction which went the length of turning out of their poor little homes the labourers who had spent their best years in their service—with the heroic Smith's exertions to secure the free labourers a fair deal and to defeat the suicidal tactics of their late owners—it is for the historian of Jamaica to deal. It had been said that slaves could not breathe the air of England. Now, wherever the Union Jack waved, the slave became free. The emancipation of the slave has been signalised by Lecky as one of the very few perfectly

virtuous acts done by any legislature. From the date of Lord Mansfield's ruling in the case of the slave, *Summersett* (June 22nd, 1772), to Emancipation Day in the West Indies (August 1st, 1838), sixty-six years had elapsed. Granville Sharp was long dead; Wilberforce was dead; but Clarkson lived at a ripe old age, to see the vessel he had piloted reach port. Among so many monuments raised to the conquerors of dingy African tribes and to shifty politicians, England might well find room for a national memorial to the noblest and most disinterested of her sons—Sharp, Wilberforce, Clarkson, Stephen, Sturge, Knibb, Brougham and Lionel Smith.

In an age when no one in this country has heard the clank of fetters or seen a man or woman exposed for sale, silly people sometimes say, "I daresay the blacks were better off as slaves than they are now." We will let a freed black woman reply to that.

Mrs. Flannagan, the author of *Antigua and the Antiguan*s, writes in 1844: "A short time ago I was speaking to an old woman whom I knew when she was a slave on Mackinnon's estate, and among other questions, I asked her: 'Juncho, are you happier now than when you was a slave—are you better off now than you was then—or would you be satisfied to return to slavery and become once more the property of your old master?' 'Miss,' returned the poor old creature, 'me no going to tell 'tory, me 'peek de truth; me no better off now dan me was den nor no so well off; for den me hab house and garden and me could raise 'tock and plant yam and pitates and green and eberything else; and now me free, me hab notting.' 'And where is your home now?' I asked. 'Why when

August come, massa call me an' he say, Me no want you to lib here no more, you no good to work, you must go, me want your house to gib to one oder somebody dat's strong, no old like you, an' your garden me want. So you know Misis me forced to go, so me come to town wid me daughter and me lib wid she for me can do but lilly work now.' 'Then you would rather be a slave again?' 'Oh no misis, me no want to be slabe again me sure. God made me free an' me bless God for it; me no want to be slabe again.' 'But I understood you were better off . . .?' 'Well misis it true me better off den dan me am now, for since me free me no get much; sometimes me no eat bread all day for me daughter hab so many pic'nees she no able to gib me much; but den me know me free; slabery is one bad something sometimes . . . s'pose you have one picnee, dat pic'nee sick; well he put in de sick-house; me 'bliged to go field; me want to go see me sick pic'nee, but me no must go, me hab to work till ebening praps; when work done, me go see poor sick pic'nee, but me must no 'top wid he. Me hab make haste go; den me pic'nee say Mammie, 'top wid me, no go, mammie; but me forced to go an' lebe me poor pic'nee. Den gen missis, praps me pic'nee do something bad, something he ought not to do, an' massa take he and tie his two hands up to one tree, else he make two men stretch he upon de ground and den de driber lick he, an' me pic'nee bawl, but me no dare say, Don't do so massa—let him go. Me hab to go way an' lebe him dere, so you see, missis, dat make me say me no lub slabery. Now when me young, me had to work hard, hab dig cane holes, weed cane, pick grass, do eberyting, but now me ole an' no able to work, dey take away me house because me no belongs to dem,

but den me know me free an' me bless God me am freed.'

"This was Juncho's tale; it proved negroes do feel for their relations when in trouble or suffering; but with regard to her being turned out of her house I don't think that is quite correct, for I never heard of an Antigua planter doing such a thing. Perhaps all of her children who could be of any service to the estate quitted it, and the manager might have told her that if they did not return, she must leave too."

The Order in Council which decreed the eventual emancipation of all slaves in the British crown colonies applied, in addition to Trinidad and other West Indian islands, to two more distant possessions, the Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius. Of these dependencies little need be said here. They had so recently been acquired by Britain that slavery, as it existed within them, remained of the Dutch and French types. In 1790, the population of the Cape was estimated at fourteen thousand Dutch and seventeen thousand slaves. The importation of slaves, chiefly Malays and natives of Portuguese East Africa, which had been carried on by the Dutch East Company, was prohibited under the short-lived rule of the Batavian Republic (1803-1805), and was not, of course, resumed, when Britain took over the colony in 1807. The Dutch planters of Demerara bore a bad name. In South Africa, however, the lot of the slaves was not intolerable. They were employed in ordinary husbandry, in a good climate, and their masters, the Boers, were simple, rustic folk not likely to keep their life-long servants at a severe distance. But when the English governor, Lord Charles Somerset, in 1823, introduced measures, of the type with which

we have become familiar, facilitating manumission, sanctioning marriage between slaves, regulating the hours of labour and limiting the owner's right of punishment to twenty-five strokes with the rod, the slaves, it was complained, became intractable. A petty outbreak occurred, and was put down with rigour. A further order in 1826, permitting slaves to buy their freedom, set the Boers grumbling. It was the interference of the alien Government which aroused their discontent. Rather than submit to it, they proposed immediate emancipation. This, notwithstanding, did not take place till December 1st, 1834, at which time there were 39,021 slaves in the colony worth over £3,000,000 sterling. When only £1,247,000 was awarded by way of compensation, a good many of the Dutch found themselves on the brink of ruin.

"The Boer settler," says Sir H. H. Johnston, "at no time showed fiendish cruelty to the natives he was dispossessing, but he was determined to make of the native a serf and denied him the rights of a man like unto himself. If the native revolted against this attitude, he was exterminated in a business-like fashion; but if he submitted, as did most of the Hottentots, he was treated with patriarchal kindness and leniency. The Dutch settlers appear from the first to have dissociated their dealings with the Hottentots from the ordinary code of morals. It was not thought dishonest to cheat them, nor thought illegal to rob them, not thought immoral to use their women as concubines. So entirely without scruple were the Dutch in this last respect that whole races arose and have since become nations, likely to survive and prosper, whose origin was illicit union of Dutch men and Hottentot women. These 'bastards,' as they were frankly called by

the Dutch, were well treated; they were not disowned, were usually converted to Christianity, and were taught to lead a more or less civilised life and to talk the Dutch language, which they speak in a corrupt form at the present day. In short, the morals of the Dutch were those of the Old Testament."

Seeing themselves about to be deprived of their slaves, the Boers sought to replace them by the Hottentots. The vagrancy laws against the natives were strengthened. Philip, a missionary who made himself hated by the Dutch by his advocacy of natives' rights, speaks of a law which compelled the Hottentot to bind himself for service for fourteen years and gave his employer a right to the services of his children, born on the estate, from the age of eight to eighteen. But the Boers of South Africa were, a hundred years ago, a body destitute of political power and influence. An ordinance to amend the vagrant laws was disallowed on the ground that it was designed to secure a sufficiency of labourers to the masters on their own terms. Thenceforward, the Dutch of South Africa had to make up their minds to cultivate their land with their own hands and with such help as they could pay for—one result of the change being the development of wool production, for there never was any difficulty in getting the black man to pass his days merely looking after sheep.

The abolition of slavery in the erstwhile French colony of Mauritius was accomplished after the usual resistance of the planters and rather more than the usual vacillation and faint-heartedness of the governors. Indentured labourers from India very soon took the place of the slaves, who, subsequent to their emancipation, appear



rather mysteriously to have melted away. A number were, no doubt, absorbed into the town; others, it may be conjectured, were tempted to visit the continent of their ancestors, and a proportion of these again, may have been snapped up by the Arab slave-dealers so active on that coast.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES

#### I

SLAVERY was bequeathed to her revolted colonies by England. It is strange that Americans found it so often necessary to recall this to British visitors, who, within a dozen years of our Emancipation Act, or even before it, waxed indignant at finding negroes still in bondage on the mainland. That it persisted down to the Revolution was also the fault of the home government. It might be added that its introduction into the continental settlements was less premeditated and ruthless than in the islands.

This was due to Virginia and Maryland offering less scope to capitalistic exploitation on a large scale. Lured thither in the hope of gold, Captain Smith and his successors were at last forced to realise that what wealth lay in the basins of the James and the Potomac could only be extracted by the homely and painstaking methods of agriculture. The fathers of the Old Dominion perforce became farmers. "They came out to the colony with their families at their own cost, and were granted twelve acres apiece to be cultivated free of rent for the first year under an ordinary system of tenant right." To assist them and further to populate the country, labourers under inden-

tures were encouraged to go out from the mother country. As in the West Indies, by this channel, the Government hoped to get rid of the least desirable elements at home. Bacon, as is well known, protested against this practice: "It is a shameful and unblessed thing to take the scum of people and wicked condemned men, to be the people with whom you plant"; although, as we know, the plan had some success in Australia. To the ne'er-do-wells themselves, the loophole of escape was so far from inviting that, according to the Spanish ambassador, one out of three felons condemned to the gallows, refused it and asked the hangman to despatch him on the spot, as "if he were thus relieved of a greater evil."<sup>1</sup>

In their darkest hour, the Virginian settlers discovered the sweet uses of tobacco, and on that herb, so strenuously disapproved of by their sovereign, they staked their fortunes. Tobacco demanded no intolerable toil as did sugar; it took no toll of men's lives. The early Virginians might have gone on growing their crops as they had done in England had not the system of indentured labour proved unsatisfactory. The term of the apprentice's engagement did not much outlast the process of training him, and so soon as he was free, he bought land and entered into competition with his late employer. The economic problem would doubtless have adjusted itself notwithstanding, as it did elsewhere and notably further north, had not a Dutch privateer arrived on the coast, in an evil hour, with twenty-two negroes aboard. They had been taken off a Portuguese slaver (as the first negroes imported into Barbados had been) and were bought by the colonial administrators. Hired out to the farmers, the black men, instead of shirking work or feigning sickness,

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Modern History of the British Empire*, Vol. I.

so far surpassed the whites as workers that a second human cargo brought in 1630 from the New Netherlands was eagerly bought up. From 1630 onwards, negroes were poured into the colony from the Dutch possessions and the West Indies. In 1649, Virginia had fifteen thousand whites and three hundred negroes; in 1671, the total population of forty thousand included two thousand negro slaves, a few free negroes, and six thousand white labourers. With the checks placed on kidnapping in England and the patronage extended by Government to the Guinea trade, the importation of the white slaves came to an end. The Virginian farmer in his turn came to look on the black man as his right arm, the very sinews of the western world.

But slavery was for a time something strange to the English husbandmen who had first learned to till their fields in company with their fellow villagers. They spoke of the black men as their servants—it may be suspected that they allowed them something like a wage. They might be seen working in the fields beside them. It seemed not unreasonable that a negro should occasionally buy and farm a bit of land for himself. Then the difference between the blacks and the white servants came to be noticed. The white man remembered he was bound for a certain term and took care to claim his freedom. The black man worked cheerfully on . . . presently, while the white labourer's indentures could be transferred for the sum of fifteen pounds, the servant "not bound for a term," in other words, the negro bound for life, came to fetch twice that price in the labour market. The negroes were slaves. In 1660, the colonial assembly enacted that "whereas some doubts have arisen whether any children

got by an Englishman upon a negro woman shall be slaves or free . . . all children born in the colony shall be bond or free according to the condition of the mother." Englishmen in Virginia thus secured the privilege inseparable from slavery of selling their own children or seeing them sold by the mother's owner; and the English colonies on the North American continent had followed the West Indian settlements in the path which was to lead ultimately to a bloody and fratricidal war and to the ruin of their descendants.

Before the end of the seventeenth century, most if not all the tobacco plantations were worked by slaves. Many of the holdings were very small and the conditions of slavery were much less harsh in the tobacco colonies than in the sugar islands. In Maryland, under the kindly rule of Lord Baltimore, the negroes were nearly always baptised and treated with some gentleness as Christians. That they were not withheld from baptism in Virginia seems proved by the General Assembly of the province finding it necessary to pass a law asserting that the rite did not enfranchise the children of slaves (September 23rd, 1667). At this stage, we hear of no burnings or mutilations, such as make the name of Barbados for ever infamous. The cultivation of tobacco involved hard work but no great hardships. The seed was sown in late winter or early spring in a special bed of deep mould, dressed with wood ashes, and the fields were dug out and divided by deep furrows into mounds three or four feet apart. During, or just after, a spring rain, the young plants are transplanted to the mounds, care being taken that the ground is not too dry. The experienced hand can plant a thousand a day. A series of hoeings and ploughings

precedes the stripping of the leaves down to a specified number on each stalk, and each leaf must be carefully examined at certain seasons for traces of the horn worm. When the leaf begins to turn yellow, the crop is harvested and dried, to be sorted and "prized" some months later in weather moist enough to make the leaves pliable. The hands not employed on this task would be set to cleaning new fields, tending secondary crops and doing odd jobs about the plantation. "The whole circle of the year on a tobacco estate," says one writer, "is one scene of bustle and toil"; but such a year would be preferred by most labourers to a month in the sugar mill.

Meanwhile, in Virginia, the negroes multiplied. No one would pay wages to a labourer when he could get his work done for nothing by a black born on his land or purchased originally at a low price. The poor white men with no land of their own were crowded out and overflowed into the unoccupied land about Albemarle Sound, thus forming the nucleus of the state of North Carolina. As these settlers grew more prosperous, they in turn acquired slaves, but for many years the country presented a markedly different aspect from Virginia. In 1711, the colony is described as composed of poor isolated scattered settlements, each more or less self-supporting. Instead of being sent out in organised gangs to work on a plantation, the slaves, as in the ancient world, were exercised in every sort of handicraft, by which they maintained their respective communities. Charleston was founded in the year 1670 by a mixed body of emigrants from England, Barbados, Bermuda and New York. The ownership of the Carolinas was vested under a patent granted by Charles II in eight joint proprietors. A

fundamental constitution was drawn up for the new province by John Locke, who though quoted long years after as condemning slavery, included in it an article which ran: "Every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves of what opinion or religion soever." Dozens of men and women were being hanged every Monday in Charles II's reign for stealing goods to the value of five shillings under the spur of hunger or sudden temptation, while the philosopher, John Locke, sat in his study carefully elaborating a system by which a certain class of men could steal the labour and persons of their fellows and if they chose, their lives.<sup>1</sup>

The clause was probably inserted to protect the Barbadians who had brought their slaves with them to the new colony and to encourage the immigration of wealthy foreigners. The proprietors' hope that Carolina would produce silk and wine for the home market was doomed to disappointment. For the next fifty years, the whites in the southern half of the province had to make a living as best they could by trading with the islands, timber cutting and farming. In 1708, the population numbered 3,500 whites, of whom 120 were indentured servants, 1,400 Indian captives, and 4,100 negro slaves. Virginia, in 1699, had issued the first of her many protests against the further importation of negroes. Farsighted men perceived the uselessness of an increasing coloured servile element in a community which, from the Merrimac to the Savannah, appeared like to reproduce the ordinary agricultural conditions of the mother country. Obstinate,

<sup>1</sup> The draft is in Locke's own handwriting, and the erasures and corrections prove that he devoted a great deal of care to it.

the home Government vetoed all the acts of the provincial assemblies in restriction of the slave trade. Men, however, could not have been forced to buy wares of which they had no need. Slavery would have died a natural death in British America but for two developments, as disastrous to the black man as the creation of the sugar industry in the islands.

In 1724, rice was introduced from Madagascar into South Carolina. Whites who had hitherto been content to subsist by exporting the produce of their farms to the sugar islands, hoped by embarking in this new industry to become as rich as their customers. Rice for its cultivation requires watery surfaces in which the low levels of the province abounded. The crop is produced by alternate floodings and hoeings, under conditions of heat and moisture which induce malaria. The white men of Carolina had no intention of reaping this crop at the risk of their own lives. The negroes, many of them till now employed in healthful handicrafts or garden work, were turned into the rice fields, to stand for hours ankle deep in mud while the sun beat fiercely down on their ill-protected heads. They died fast and their place was taken by importations from Africa. A sinister change came over the land. The settlers ceased to be farmers; they became planters in the West Indian, not the Virginian, connotation of the word. They drew away from their black bondsmen, who left to the care of overseers and drivers in the rice swamps, soon acquired a distinctive brutishness. Happily the industry achieved no great expansion. The single sugar island of Jamaica employed four times as many slaves as the rice coast, of which Charleston was the focus. By the middle of the eighteenth



century, there were thirty-nine thousand blacks to twenty-five thousand whites in South Carolina; in 1765, the numbers were ninety thousand and forty thousand. Apparently, the economic requirements of the industry were satisfied, for in the year of George III's accession, South Carolina, like Virginia, tried to check the introduction of slaves. Again, the government of England disallowed the restriction and reprimanded the governor. In Virginia, by this time, the black population had risen to 150,000, double the number of whites. In North Carolina, on the other hand, there were only sixteen thousand slaves as against seventy-seven thousand whites. Founding the colony of Georgia in 1733, the great-hearted Oglethorpe had forbidden slave-holding, as well as the use of strong liquors; both injunctions were disregarded—in 1760, the five thousand whites controlled two thousand slaves, who may have been brought by immigrants from the neighbouring colonies or introduced under the pressure of competition with the rice-growers. It is estimated that the British provinces on the mainland of North America in 1720 were peopled by 339,000 whites and 96,000 blacks; in 1760, the total population amounted to a million and a half, of which about three hundred thousand were negroes inhabiting Maryland and the south.

Slavery existed without any real economic necessity in the northern colonies. Negroes were treated badly, as was everyone else, by the Puritans of New England, though their Jewish Bible contained some injunctions in favour of the bondman. The whites of New York lived up to the bad traditions passed down by the former Dutch settlers. In 1704, an outbreak by no means for-

midable among the few blacks was punished with a severity worthy of Barbados. Twenty-one slaves were hanged, broken on the wheel, left to die on a gibbet, and roasted to death, one of these being burned by a slow fire "that he might continue in torment for eight or ten hours and continue to burn till he died and was consumed to ashes."

In 1741, the rumour of a plot in which three whites were concerned with the slaves, threw the community into one of those panics which explain the present-day outbreaks of savagery in the south. After thirty negroes had been put to death, the magistrates held their hand, utterly confounded by the multitude of charges levelled against everybody by everyone.

In New Jersey, supplying faggots to roast niggers became a minor industry.<sup>1</sup> In Pennsylvania, the Quakers and Germans frowned on the institution of slavery. The owners are said to have been the most considerate in the Anglo-Saxon world, and, in 1780, it was decreed that all children born of slaves after a certain date should be free. North of Maryland, slavery was dying out fast at the epoch of the Revolution.

The multiplication of the negroes in the south, on the other hand, and risings, rather more serious than those in New York, in 1720 and 1739, produced a change for the worse in Virginia and the Carolinas. The whites were becoming frightened of the black folk among whom they had been reared. Savage laws, prescribing burnings and mutilations, on the lines of those long in force in the British West Indies were revived or enacted. But whereas in Barbados, the man who killed his slave was fined only fifteen pounds, in South Carolina, even to

<sup>1</sup> Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*.

cut out the tongue of a slave or to chastise him otherwise than by whipping, imprisoning or putting him in irons, might entail a penalty of as much as a hundred pounds. The captive people did not, therefore, stand to gain much by a change of their allegiance when the Revolution broke out. If the lying rumour ever reached their ears, that the slave who murdered his rebel owner would be given his victim's plantation by the British,<sup>1</sup> they never acted upon it; and not more than a few thousands took advantage of the King's genuine promise of freedom to those who came over to his side.

That the negroes in the United States of America were not liberated in accordance with the literal terms of the Declaration of Independence was mainly due to nobody's knowing what should be done with them. This of course, was not true of the rice growers of South Carolina. In Virginia, the holdings of slaves were not very large. A census taken in eight counties, the year after the Yorktown surrender, shows that the average holding was between 8.5 and 13. The largest holder in Maryland had 316 slaves, and the largest in Virginia, 257. George Washington owned 188 negroes. In 1794, the Father of his county wrote: "Were it not that I am principled against selling negroes as you would cattle in a market, I would not in twelve months hence be possessed of a single one as a slave. I shall be happily mistaken if they are not a very troublesome species of property ere many years have passed over their heads." More tobacco was produced than was wanted. The black people bred and mustered and had to be clothed and fed. They ate more than they got out of the soil, many

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Lady of Quality.*

parts of Virginia were exhausted. It came to be said that one day, instead of the slaves running away from the planter, the planter would run away from the slaves.

That did not come to pass. While Washington was ruefully surveying his human property and wishing them at the devil, there occurred that second great development in the economic history of the southern states which was to rivet the fetters of the negro anew. The chance present of a bag of rice seed by a skipper to a Charleston merchant had restored the fortunes of South Carolina. In the first years of her independence, the great American republic found a fresh source of wealth in cotton. Arkwright could little have dreamed when he set up his water-mill by the stream in Derbyshire that he had given slavery a new lease of life, and was cementing the foundations of a strange system of society on the other side of the Atlantic. Shrewd Americans heard Europe clamouring for cotton and discovered that the half-settled areas between the southern coasts and the lower Mississippi could abundantly supply her need. Carolina was already planting the islands along her seaboard with the coveted seed. In 1793, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin. The future of the new industry was assured. Its establishment was welcomed by a patriotic American. The cotton cultivation, he said, did not require any great capital and should afford a livelihood to thousands of poor whites without their being reduced to working in the fields side by side with slaves. He looked forward to seeing the new territories filled with an industrious and independent yeomanry.

Nothing, as we know, could be further from his anticipations than the result. America was turning capitalist. The severance from Europe with its vague traditions of public service had directed men's ambition purely towards the rapid accumulation of wealth. Negroes could work faster than white men and needed not to be paid. The poor white if he reached the steaming deltas of the south-west was apt to find them already occupied by richer men. The planters of Virginia and Maryland pricked up their ears and took heart again. Few of them displayed Washington's scruples about selling negroes like cattle in the market. These black beasts who were eating their heads off could be turned into goods, the most saleable! The Old Dominion where negro slavery had for years worn its kindest aspect was turned into a breeding ground for human livestock. Not that instances were wanting of planters taking the finer course of emigrating with their families and their whole establishments to the new grounds—some even requesting the acquiescence of their slaves in the change. The Ballard brothers transported themselves and their negroes from Norfolk, Va., to New Orleans by sea, taking care to declare in the margin of the ship's manifests that they were intending settlers and not dealers in human flesh.<sup>1</sup> By now, 1819, the slave trade had been outlawed and the vast majority of the slave-holding emigrants preferred as safer the long overland passage to the south-west.

Thus began the internal slave trade of the United States which endured as long as slavery itself. Slave dealing became a highly profitable industry. The mills of Lancashire had to be kept going and the fuel which

<sup>1</sup> Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 1918.

drove them was the blood and sweat of the American negro. The black descendant of six generations born on the same plantation, accustomed to serve the same family was torn away from the cabin to which he was as deeply attached as his master to his manor house. His plight differed little from his remote forbears in Africa. The very word used by the Arab man-catchers was applied in a slightly altered form to the trains of black men and women which year after year were met with by travellers, trudging the long, long roads that led towards the far south. Featherstonaugh, an Englishman, came on such a "coffle" halted by a stream in Western Virginia. The male slaves to the number of two hundred, lay about, manacled and chained to each other, while the traders watched them, their guns in readiness. The women and the lame were taken across the river in wagons and flat-bottomed boats, while a ford was found for the men. At such crossings, the dealers had to be on their guard. Here their prey was apt to make a bid for freedom. Drivers were sometimes attacked and overpowered. It was to their interest to keep their captives in good humour. The caravan was usually accompanied by a slave or two who had already been south, and who essayed to encourage his fellows by glowing pictures of the land they were going to—where the sun always shone and oranges and sugar could be had for the asking.

These processions were necessarily seen through eyes prejudiced for or against the institution which the southern planters called the Patriarchal System of Society and strangers, Slavery. (In the South, we learn, the words "slave" and "slavery" were seldom heard. A

planter spoke of his "negroes" or his "hands" or his "force" or more loosely still, of his "people.") The negro is a cheerful soul and it may readily be believed that the variety and incidents of the journey were diverting rather than disagreeable to most. How differently the transplantation affected individuals was noticed by Captain Basil Hall. In Georgia, he came upon a party of emigrants trekking with their "people." Two of the men walked handcuffed together, one with a cheerful mien, the other downcast and silent. "What have you two boys been doing that you got to wear them ruffles?" enquired the driver of the traveller's coach. "Oh," replied the cheerful black, "These ruffles are the handiest things to walk with!" The Englishman made further enquiry. The dejected-looking slave was being taken away for ever from his wife, who belonged to another master in the country they had come from. It was feared he might seek to go back to her and for that reason he had been manacled to a bachelor slave who had no longing to return.

Very painful was the impression left on the mind of Edward L. Godkin, a visitor from the northern states, in 1856. He writes, "I fell in with an emigrant party on their way to Texas. The mules had sunk in the mud, the wagons were already embedded as far as the wheels. The women of the party, lightly clad in cotton, had walked for miles, knee deep in water, through the brake, exposed to the pitiless pelting of the storm, and were now crouching forlorn and woebegone, under the shelter of a tree. The men were making feeble attempts to make a fire. 'Colonel,' said one of them, as I rode past, 'This is the gate of hell, ain't it?' . . . The hardships

the negroes go through who are attached to one of these emigrant parties baffles description. They trudge all day through mud and thicket without rest or respite. Thousands of miles are traversed by these weary wayfarers without their knowing or caring why, urged on by the whip, and in the assurance no change of place can bring any change to them. Hard work, merciless floggings, coarse food, are all that await them and all that they can look to. I have never passed them, staggering along in the rear of the wagons at the close of a long day's march, the weakest farthest in the rear, the strongest already utterly spent, without wondering how christendom can look so calmly on so foul and monstrous a wrong as this American slavery."

Elsewhere we read: "At Louisville, a gentleman took passage having with him a family of blacks—husband, wife and child. The master was bound for Memphis, Tennessee, at which place he intended to take all except the man ashore. The latter was handcuffed, and made up his mind he was destined for the Southern market. Taking a moment when his master's back was turned, he ran forward and jumped into the river. Of course, he sank, and his master was several dollars the poorer." Even the family which had been sold together enjoyed no assurance that they would not be parted at their destination or *en route*. The traders were ever ready to do business on the road, or to add to their own purchases at any halting-place. "Is it true," a mulatto woman was asked, "that the traders take mothers from their babies?" "Massa, it is true," was the answer, "For here last week, such a girl (naming her) who lives about a mile off, was taken after dinner—knew nothing of it in the morning—



sold, put into the gang, and her baby given to a neighbour. She was a stout young woman and brought a good price."

Once a negro reached the West Indies, his chances of not being sold away from the plantation were on the whole good, so long at least as his master remained solvent. But the demand for black labour in the cotton fields and the closing of the sea-borne slave traffic, created in the United States a vast slave market. "The owner of brood mares is entitled to their product," maintained Mr. Gholson in the legislature of Virginia on January 18th, 1831, "and the owner of female slaves to their increase." In the twelve months ending in 1836, Virginia exported forty thousand slaves, of the aggregate value of twenty-four million dollars. In the same year, 250,000 slaves were introduced into Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas and Alabama from the more northern states. Commenting on this, Professor Dew observed, "Virginia is, in fact, a negro-raising state for the other states. This emigration furnishes every inducement to the master to attend to the negroes, to encourage breeding, and to cause the greatest possible number to be raised."

Trade, we used to be told, follows the flag. Much more often, it carries it forward. Foreseeing that the cotton states on this side of the Mississippi must ere long be saturated and replenish their human stock by natural increase, the gentlemen of Virginia looked out for fresh markets. Outside the United States there could be none. Beyond the three-mile limit prowled the British cruisers. Slavery could no more legally exist upon the sea than upon the soil of Britain. The merchants in black flesh

began to cast longing glances across the Red River. Mexico would not tolerate slavery but Mexico was weak. "If it should be our lot," said a Virginian judge in 1829, "as I trust it will be, to acquire the country of Texas, the price of slaves will rise again." So in the 'forties, a quarrel was picked with Mexico, the slave-dealing Anglo-Saxons triumphed over the Spanish-speaking republicans, and Texas was wrested away, to become a slave state. Much sentiment was expended on a party of American filibusters, shot or massacred, if you like, by the hard-pressed Mexicans at a place called Goliad. In the interests of civilization, justice and humanity it is much to be regretted that a clean sweep was not made long before of all the English-speaking invaders. Under the hypocritical pretence of emancipating a subject nation, a ceaseless agitation was carried on by the Americans against the Spanish government in Cuba. The real object, of course, was to add another slave-holding state to the unholy Union.

The slave-raising states in the fourth decade of the century were Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee (Fundamentalist Tennessee which clings by the Hebrew scriptures), North Carolina and Missouri. The rice growers of South Carolina, the cotton planters of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana (where sugar also was grown), and the colonists of Texas and Arkansas were slave-consumers. Seven pages in a book by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe<sup>1</sup> are devoted to specimens of the advertisements common at that time in southern newspapers. The Virginian public is informed by this medium that Mr. H. J. McDaniell, agent for Wm. Crow, wishes to purchase a number of negroes of both sexes and ages

<sup>1</sup> *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

for the southern market. Mr. William Harker of Dorchester, Maryland, informs the slave-holders of the county that he is again in the market, and that persons having slaves for life to dispose of, will find he gives the highest prices. In the *Nashville Gazette* (October 22nd, 1852), we read: "For Sale—Several likely girls from ten to eighteen years old, a woman twenty-four, a very valuable woman twenty-five years old, with three very likely children."

To the Virginian planter who had fallen into debt, even if he felt like George Washington, these advertisements offered a severe temptation. His estate was perhaps exhausted; it must furnish support for all; to emancipate his slaves would be to defraud his creditors. Dr. Bailey, a resident in the state, went too far in denying that the slave-holders bred negroes for sale, but we can readily believe there were at least a few among them who resisted the bait held out by the traders. "The Davises," says this correspondent, "are the great slave-dealers. They are Jews, who came to Petersburg many years ago as poor pedlars; and, I am informed, are members of a family which has its representatives in Philadelphia, New York, etc. During the summer and fall, they buy up the slaves at low prices, trim, shave, wash them, fatten them, so that they may look sleek and sell them to great profit. It might not be unprofitable to inquire how much Northern capital, and what firms in some of the Northern cities, are connected with this detestable business."

The compiler of an anti-slavery publication in the middle of the nineteenth century dwells on the misery of the unfortunate beings living in continual apprehension of being sold to the "soul-driver" as the trader was

called. "Suspense hangs like a thundercloud over his head. He knows that there is not a passing hour, whether he wakes or sleeps, which may not be the last that he shall spend with his wife and children. Every day or every week some acquaintance is snatched from his side. 'Surely my turn will come next,' is his harrowing conviction. Should a white stranger approach his master's mansion, he fears that the soul-driver has come and awaits in terror the overseer's mandate, 'You are sold, follow that man.' There is no threat so effectual to secure labour or deter from misconduct, as the threat of being delivered to the soul-driver." "When my wife was nine years old," says a negro missionary, "a Georgia trader drove up to the door and called her. That morning her master had gone from the breakfast table and sold her." She left behind her parents and brothers.

"Negroes.—The undersigned would respectfully state to the public that he has leased the stand in the forks of the road near Natchez for a term of years, and that he intends to keep a large lot of negroes on hand during the year. He will sell as low or lower than any other trader at this place or in New Orleans. He has just arrived from Virginia with a very likely lot of field men and women, also, house servants, three cooks and a carpenter. Call and see.—Thos. G. James, Natchez, September 28th, 1852."

The above announcement is reprinted from the *Natchez Courier*, November 20th, 1852. Had no families, it is asked, been separated to form the assortment? Where were the children of the likely lot of field men and field women? The foreigner, passing the forks of the road near Natchez, was struck, perhaps, by the

bustle and picturesqueness of this negro encampment under the hot sun of Mississippi. The young negroes resigned themselves cheerfully to this brief surcease from labour and strove to invite kindly-looking customers by a cheerful manner. As to the women who had been parted from their children and the older folks crying for Ole' Virginny, they would by now have been taught by Mr. James and his drivers to stop their howling or it would be the worse for them.

At New Orleans, Basil Hall beheld the new arrivals from the East in slightly less pleasant circumstances. "In the courtyard of the gaol, there were scattered about no fewer than three hundred slaves, mostly brought from the country for sale, and kept there at twenty cents. or about tenpence a day, penned up like cattle till the next market day. The scene was not unlike what I suppose the encampment of a wild African horde to be. . . . Men, women and children of all ages were crowded together in groups, or seated together in circles round fires, cooking their measures of Indian corn and rice. Clothes of all colours were hung up to dry on the walls of the prison, while the naked children were playing about quite merrily, unconscious, poor little wretches, of their present degradation and their future life of bondage. On the balcony, along with us, stood three or four slave-dealers, overlooking the herd of human victims below and speculating upon the qualities of each. The day was bright and beautiful, and there was in the curious scene no appearance of wretchedness, except what was imparted to it by reflection from our own minds."

The negro who had been flattered with the prospect

of an easy life in the Sunny South was rudely undeceived so soon as he reached the plantation. Cotton was King and his priests cared not how many were his victims. All visitors from the North agreed the slaves in the south-west were overdriven. Yet the cultivation of the raw cotton was not in itself as disagreeable a process as the manufacture of sugar, and it might even be conceded that under humane employers it involved far less painful exertion than was required of the operatives handling the same material in far-off Lancashire. In April the cotton was planted by means of ploughing and drilling. There followed two or three weeks' thinning out with the hoe then more ploughing. This went on till July when the cultivation ceased. The crop was picked in August and September, but the fields remained white with cotton till far on into the new year. The amount that could be picked by one hand is variously stated at from sixty to a hundred and fifty-seven pounds a day. A proportion of hands was employed in carting the cotton to the barns in the baling process and in loading. Where there was a river, the great heavy bales were let slide down a chute onto the deck of the waiting vessel. There they were handled by gangs of poor Irish immigrants. Observing the risk these poor whites ran, of being knocked overboard or crushed by the huge re-bounding bales, a traveller enquired why the negroes were not employed at this bottom of the chute as well as at the top. "Well," said the skipper, "a slave costs money and his owner don't care to risk him. But if one of these Paddies is knocked overboard or gets his back broke, that's nobody's loss."

Apparently, the ungrateful negroes betrayed no con-

sciousness of this solicitude or their superior good fortune. "They are constantly and steadily driven up to their work," remarked Olmsted, "and the stupid, plodding machine-like manner in which they labour is painful to witness. This was especially the case with the hoe-gangs. I repeatedly rode through their lines at a canter, with other horsemen, often coming upon them suddenly, without producing the smallest change or interruption in the dogged action of the labourers or causing one of them, so far as I could see, to lift an eye from the ground. I think it told a more painful story than any I have ever heard of the cruelty of slavery. It was emphasised by a tall and powerful negro who walked to and fro in the rear of the line, frequently cracking his whip and calling out in the surliest manner to one and another, 'Shove your hoe, there! Shove your hoe!' But I never saw him strike anyone with the whip."

In the cotton fields of South Carolina, a pleasanter scene was observed. Some of the hands were smoking, and each gang had a fire burning, by which to light their pipes and cook their breakfast. This was the custom even in summer. To each gang was attached a boy or girl whose duty it was to bring water and run errands as required by the driver. This man was unceasingly urging the slaves to strike harder and hoe deeper, and otherwise taking care to get the best work out of his "force." Brutality in the field could not have been common, since in the southern South, negroes generally preferred outdoor work to house work. It gave them more freedom. The domestic servant was always at all hours at someone's beck and call. In the larger plantations of Georgia and South Carolina, each hand was given a piece of work.

This was usually performed by two o'clock. He had the rest of the day to himself.

Hall thought the slave villages uncommonly neat and comfortable and superior to those of any country he had seen (*sic*). "Each hut was divided into small rooms or compartments, fitted with regular bedplaces, besides which they had all chimneys and doors, and some, though only a few of them, possessed the luxury of windows. I counted twenty-eight huts, occupied by one hundred and forty souls, or about five in each. The number included sixty children. . . ." At the Great House, "the goodness of the attendance, together with the comfort, cheerfulness and cleanliness of the whole establishment, satisfied me that by a proper course of discipline, slaves may be made good servants, a fact of which I had begun to question the possibility." In Virginia the negroes enjoyed great roaring fires, so that their cabins at night, when the door was open, appeared at a distance like fierce furnaces.

The slaves were not, as in the West Indian islands, under a strict obligation to support themselves. In Virginia, in 1756, they were allowed little else but one peck of Indian corn and some salt, for the week, with a few potatoes.<sup>1</sup> In the cotton States, each hand over fourteen years of age received a ration of nine quarts of Indian corn a week, children getting from five to eight quarts apiece. This being more than they could usually consume, they were allowed to give the surplus to the hogs and poultry which they were always permitted to rear on their own account. On some plantations they could have as much land as they could plant, and were entitled to make what they could out of the produce. In

<sup>1</sup> John Woolman.



Louisiana, every slave was entitled to receive 200 lbs. of pork every year. In other parts, salt fish and salt beef were issued occasionally. Every Sunday was a free day and at Christmas three days were holidays. At that season the slaves are said to have been gorged with food and drink. But a planter ascribed the absence of savage crime among them to the low diet on which they were kept.<sup>1</sup> They were underfed and overworked.

As everywhere under the regime of slavery, the happiness of the slave, unless he was sufficiently high-minded to resent his condition, depended on the attitude of his owner. Hodgson, an English visitor, was shocked by the indifference of the cotton planters to human life. He came upon one of these gentry seated on his balcony with his gun covering a negro in the yard below. The black was obviously very sensible of his disagreeable position. He had run away and having returned, threw himself upon his owner's mercy and implored him to intercede with the overseer to spare him a flogging. This request was referred by the master to his subordinate and both were awaiting the answer. "In the meantime," explained the planter, "the fellow may try to run away again and in that case, I shall be obliged to shoot him." Hodgson heard of men going out to shoot runaway slaves, "for a frolic." Catching sight of a black hiding himself in the brake, "they all fired at the game, but unfortunately missed." A woman owner asked a visitor to flog one of her slaves and was shocked by his discourtesy in refusing. She complained of this to another caller, who, with typical southern courtesy, hastened to help a lady and whipped the slave to her heart's content. If a slave refused to take his punishment or resisted the overseer,

<sup>1</sup> Fanny Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*, 1863.

they "had to shoot him," to encourage the others. But the overseer who thus destroyed his master's property was almost certain to be discharged.

Olmsted was riding with an overseer, when they detected a negro girl evidently trying to hide herself in the bush by the wayside. The overseer asked her how she came to be there and why she was not at work. She said something about having been shut in by her father. Whether her story was true or false could have been ascertained in two minutes by riding on to where the gang was working. But the overseer had made up his mind.

"That won't do," he said. "Get down." He got off his horse and holding it with his left hand, struck the girl thirty or forty blows across the shoulders with his tough, flexible rawhide whip (a terrible instrument for the purpose). They were well laid on, at arms length, but with no appearance of angry excitement on the part of the overseer. At every stroke, the girl winced and exclaimed, 'Yes, sir,' or 'Ah, sir,' or 'Please sir!' not groaning or screaming. At length he stopped and said, 'Now tell me the truth.' The girl repeated the same story. 'You have not had enough yet,' said he. 'Pull up your clothes—lie down!' The girl, without any hesitation, without a word or look of remonstrance or entreaty, drew closely all her garments under her shoulders and lay down upon the ground, her face turned towards the overseer, who continued to flog her with the rawhide across her naked loins and thighs with as much strength as before. She now shrunk away from him, not rising, but writhing, grovelling and screaming, 'Oh, don't, sir!' 'Oh, please, stop, master!' 'Please, sir, please sir!' 'Oh, that's enough,

master!’ ‘Oh, Lord, oh, master, master—oh, God, master, please stop!’

“A young gentleman of fifteen was with me; he had ridden in front, and now, turning on his horse, looked back with an expression only of impatience at the delay. I glanced again at the perfectly passionless, but rather grim, businesslike face of the overseer and again at the young gentleman . . . if not indifferent, he had evidently not the faintest sympathy with my emotion. . . . The screaming yells and the whip strokes had ceased when I reached the top of the bank. Choking, sobbing, spasmodic groans only were heard. The overseer . . . laughed as he joined us and said, ‘She meant to cheat me out of a day’s work and she has done it, too.’

“‘Did you succeed in getting another story from her?’ I asked as soon as I could trust myself to speak.

“‘No, she stuck to it.’

“‘Was it not perhaps true?’—It presently appeared that she had at any rate been working during the forenoon.”

Hall, dissenting from Hodgson, thought brutality on the part of the owner or overseer was rare. To resist it, a whole squad of negroes might go on strike. If the owner was absent, an “appeal to Cæsar” often ended in the dismissal of an unpopular overseer. Individual slaves might run away and maintain themselves by fishing and killing game, or might be secretly fed by their friends on the plantation. The newspapers of the south were always full of advertisements offering rewards for runaway slaves or from the keepers of gaols calling on owners to claim a negro or negress detained on suspicion of being somebody’s property. In the *Raleigh* (N.C.)

*Standard* of July 18th, 1838, you might read: "Run away—a negro woman and two children. A few days before she went off, I burnt her with a hot iron, on the left side of her face. I tried to make the letter M.—Micajah Ricks." "I can always tell a slave, whatever his or her colour," an overseer told Olmsted. "A slave woman will always quail if you look her in the eye." A specially bred race of hounds also could always be trusted to detect a negro. Entire packs were reared for this purpose. William Gamble, of Sumpter County, Ala., was a professional slave-catcher. His charges were three dollars a day for hunting, and fifteen dollars for capturing, a runaway.

The fugitive or discontented slave sometimes fell into the hands of the Murrel gang or a similar body, who made a business of selling negroes fraudulently, contriving their escape, and selling them again as often as the game could be repeated. This was termed "running a negro." For his connivance, the slave was promised a share of the booty, but in the long run, if he was not recovered by his legitimate owner, it is thought he was generally made away with for the safety of his white accomplices.

On another plantation, Olmsted was told that the owner interfered as little as possible with the domestic habits of his slaves. "We don't care what they do when their tasks are over. We lose sight of them till next day. Their morals and manners are in their own keeping. The men may have, for instance, as many wives as they please, so long as they do not quarrel about such matters." A planter met with on a Mississippi steamer spoke of the slaves as a wicked lot, for they were fond of dancing. He would not permit this on Sundays. The negroes, as is

well known, respond eagerly to religious teaching, especially of the evangelical sort, and loved to propitiate a gloomy, irate divinity by chanting his praises and proclaiming their own sinfulness. The planters of the West Indies, all of them Church of England men, could afford to forbid this kind of religious indulgence; but though in the southern United States for the same reasons as in Barbados, conversion was not encouraged, most of the proprietors being themselves Presbyterians or Baptists or Methodists, they could not very well refuse the "comforts of religion" to their slaves. So long as the black preachers promised to say or do nothing which should impair the slave's sense of duty to his master, their ministry was frequently permitted or winked at. This toleration did not always make for the slave's real happiness. An easy-going planter complained that a preacher had reduced a cheerful happy-go-lucky set of negroes to a band of mournful, discontented wretches by tightening up their domestic relations and absolutely forbidding dancing, dicing and the eating of fish without scales—the last being something which was taboo to the Semites between the Jordan and the coast! We can hardly, therefore, deplore the intolerance of Bishop Polk, who forced all his slaves to join the less rigorous Episcopalian Church and ruled them in patriarchal fashion with the happy result that he could with perfect safety leave his estate for weeks at a time in sole charge of one trustworthy negro. This bishop, upon the secession of his state, exchanged the crozier for the sword and was rewarded by meeting a warrior's death on the field of battle. Jefferson Davis, the president to whom he owed allegiance, organised his plantation on even more generous and liberal lines, as a

kind of commonwealth, in fact, where the slaves governed themselves in a large measure by committees.

In every state, as in the society described by the Roman satirists, could be found slave favourites, slave pandars and slaves whose worth and intelligence lifted them almost, but never quite, out of the conditions of servitude. There were slaves who rode behind their masters, who as regards their dress and their mounts could scarcely be distinguished from them, who gave a coin to the other slaves who held their stirrups. There was that familiar figure of southern story and of the Hollywood film, the negro butler, hardly more trusty and trusted than the "mammy" who had brought up "young missee." Difficult as it is to reconcile the fact with the thousand well-authenticated instances of their brutality and the tone of their laws, the majority of the southern people regarded their negroes with a vague affection. Fanny Kemble, staunchest of abolitionists, observed that a southern lady never seemed to sleep easily without "having one or more little pet blacks sleeping like puppy-dogs" in her bedchamber. A Mississippi lady, an acquaintance of the present writer, confessed to him on her first visit to England that she could not easily accustom herself to the absence of black folk around her. Before the War of Secession, there was no such rigid separation of the two races as disgusts the European in America to-day. Slaves in attendance on their owners sat in the same railway coaches as white people. In many southern cities, the stranger might never have guessed the black people thronging the streets were for the most part mere chattels, denied the elemental rights of the human being. "The variety in complexion, station and attainments among

the town slaves led to a somewhat elaborate graduation of coloured society. One stratum comprised the fairly numerous quadroons and mulattoes along with certain exceptional blacks. The men among these had a pride of place as butlers and coachmen, painters and carpenters; the women fitted themselves trimly with the cast-off silks and muslins of their mistresses, walked with a mincing tread, and spoke in quiet tones with impressive nicety of grammar. This element was a conscious aristocracy of its kind, but its members were more or less irked by the knowledge that no matter how great their merits they could not cross the boundary into white society. The bulk of the real negroes, on the other hand, with an occasional mulatto among them, went their own way, the women freely indulging a native predilection for gaudy colours, carrying their burdens on their heads, arms akimbo, and laying as great store by their kerchief turbans as their paler cousins did by their beflowered bonnets. The men of this class wore their shreds and patches with an easy swing, doffed their wool hats to white men as they passed, called themselves niggers or darkies as a matter of course, took the joys and sorrows of the day as they came, improvised words to the music of their work, and continuously murdered the Queen's English, all with a true, if humble, nonchalance and a freedom from carking care."

In America, as in the West Indies, most British visitors were astonished at the patience of the slave-holders with their domestics. Like the bohemians of Chelsea, the planters never grumbled if compelled to sit waiting half an hour at table for the next course; they took it for granted that the slaves would do everything in the worst possible manner, that their rooms should be left dirty and

their children neglected by the black nurses. The door of a Virginian's house was generally left open in the day time, for the dogs and the picaninnies to enter freely. An artifice which in a white servant would have entailed dismissal was looked on as amusing if designed by a negro. We have this story from the austere Miss Martineau: "I went with a lady in whose house I was staying, to dine, one Sunday, on a neighbouring estate. Her husband happened not to be with us. . . . The carriage was ordered for eight that evening. It drew up at the door at six, and the driver, a slave, said his master had sent him and begged we would go home directly. We did so, and found my host very much surprised to see us home so early. The message was a fiction of the slave's, who wanted to get his horses put up so that he might enjoy his Sunday evening. His master and mistress laughed and took no further notice." Fanny Kemble told a black waiter to wash the lettuce before he served it next day: he applied for soap and a brush to carry out her orders.

Kindly masters obliged to get rid of an unsatisfactory servant, excusably say as little as they can about his faults to a prospective employer; but the southern mistress occasionally stretched her generosity too far. A young lady told her slave maid that she would free her and leave her money on her death. As the two were about the same age, the wench thought it only prudent to accelerate the event, and took steps to poison her mistress. The attempt was discovered and frustrated in time. The young lady, vexed by such ingratitude, sold the maid to another family, possibly with a good reference. "On the other hand," wrote Harriet Martineau, "hatred is not



too strong a word for the feeling of a large proportion of slave-holders towards particular slaves." The worst haters were women<sup>1</sup> and clergymen. A southerner might smile at the same lady's expressed conviction that none knew so little of the true character and capabilities of negroes as their owners.

The industrial slave constituted a third class. Builders, master-masons, coachmakers, wheelwrights and other tradesmen in the south were known to own their whole working staff. More often, they hired them from slave-holders who had instructed their "force" in the particular handicrafts. The Virginian master is said to have consulted the feelings of his negroes before thus leasing them out. Billy Proctor, a Georgian slave, asking a Colonel Lamar to buy him for 950 dollars, said he could earn that price within two years.<sup>2</sup> The needy or indulgent planter would hire a slave to himself—that is, the man would pay his master a fixed sum out of his earnings. The employment of hired slaves on municipal undertakings in South Carolina aroused strong protests from the white working class, but was of course approved by the planters. From this compulsory competition of the slave with the free labourer dates much of the race prejudice which still embitters the United States.

Slaves with some domestic training were hired out by their owners for service in hotels, boarding-houses and taverns. Charles Dickens, who liked the negro, confessed to an unpleasant thrill on realising that the waiter who attended on him was a slave. It was easier, of course, for this class than for any other to talk with strangers and

<sup>1</sup> This is borne out by the recollections of Louis Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave*.

<sup>2</sup> U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*.

foreigners. Profiting by a stay at a southern hotel or boarding-house, a northern woman was able to get their stories from a house-wench and a waiter. These she communicated to Mrs. Stowe.

The house-wench, Violet's father and mother both died, "as she says, 'fore I had any sense,' leaving eleven children; all scattered. 'To sabe my life, Missis, couldn't tell dis yer night where one of dem is. Massa lib in Charleston. My first husband—when we was young—nice man; we had seven children; den he sold off to Florida—neber hear from him 'gain. Ole folks die. Oh, dat's be my boderation, Missis—when ole people be dead, den we be scattered all 'bout. Den I sold up here—now hab'noder husband—hab four children up here. I lib bery easy when my young husband 'libe—and we had children bery fast. But now dese yer ones tight fellers. Massa don't 'low us to raise noting; no pig, no goat, no dog, no noting; won't allow us raise a bit of corn. We has to do jist de best we can. Dey don't gib us a siingle grain but jist two home-spun frocks—no coat 't all.

"'Can't go to meetin', 'cause, Missis, get dis work done—den get dinner. In summer, I goes every Sunday ebbing; but dese yer short days, time done get dinner dishes washed, den time get supper. Gen'lly gos Baptist church.'

"'Do your people usually go there?'

"'Dere bees tree shares ob dem; Methodist gang, Baptist gang, 'Piscopal gang. Last summer, used to hab right smart meetins in our yard, Sunday night. Massa Johnson preach to us. Den he said couldn't hab two meetins; we might go to church.'

"'Why?'

“ ‘Gracious knows. I lubs to go to meetin allers—’specially when dere’s good preaching. Lubs to hab people talk good to me. Likes to hab people read to me too. ’Cause don’t b’long to church, no reason why I shan’t.’

“ ‘Does your master like to have others read to you?’

“ ‘He won’t hinder; I an’t bound to tell him when folks reads to me. I hab my soul to sabe—he hab his soul to sabe. Our owners won’t stand few minutes and read to us; dey tink it too great honour; dey’s bery hard on us. Brack preachers sometimes talk good to us, and pray wid us; and pray a heap for DEM, too.

“ ‘I jest done hab great quarrel wid Dinah, down in de kitchen. I tells Dinah, she do what she please wid herself. Dinah she slip away somehow from her first husband, and hab anoder child by Sambo (he b’long to Massa D.); so she and her first husband dey fall out somehow. Dese yer men, yer know, is so queer, Missis, dey don’t never like sich tings.

“ ‘Ye know, Missis, things we lub, we don’t like anybody else hab ’em. Such a ting as dat, Missis, tetch your heart so, ef you don’t mind, ’twill fret you almost to death. Ef my husband was to slip away from me, Missis, dat ar way, it ud wake me right up. I’m brack, but I wouldn’t do so to my husband, neider. What I hide behind de curtain now, I can’t hide it behind de curtain when I stand before God—de whole world know it den.

“ ‘Dinah’s (second) husband say what she do for her first husband noting to him—now my husband don’t feel so. He say he wouldn’t do as Daniel do—he wouldn’t buy tings for de oder children—dem as has de children might buy de tings for dem. Well, so dere dey is—

Dinah's first husband come up whenever he can, to see his children; and Sambo, he come up to see his child, and gib Dinah tings for it.

" 'You know, Missis, Massa hab no nigger but me and one yellow girl, when he bought me and my four children; well, den Massa, he want me to breed; so he say, "Violet, you must take some nigger here in C."

" 'Den I say, "No, Massa, I can't take any here." Den he say, "You must, Violet"; 'cause you see he want me to breed for him; so he say plenty young fellers here, but I say I can't hab any ob dem. Well, den, Missis, he go down Virginia, and he bring up two niggers—and dey was pretty ole men—and Missis say, "One ob dem for you, Violet"; but I say, "No, Missis, I can't take one ob dem, 'cause I don't lub 'em, and I can't hab one I don't lub." Den Massa, he say, "You must take one of dese—and den, ef you can't lub him you must find sombody else you can lub." Den I say, "Oh, no, Massa! I can't do dat—I can't hab one ebery day." Well, den, by-and-by, Massa he buy tree more, and den Missis say, "Now, Violet, ones dem is for you." I say, "I do'no—maybe I can't lub one dem neider"; but she say, "You must hab one ob dese." Well, so Sam and I we lib along two year—he watchin my ways, and I watchin his ways.

" 'At last, one night, we was standin by de wood-pile togeder, and de moon bery shine, and I do'no how 'twas, Missis, he answer me, he want a wife, but he didn't know where he get one. I say plenty girls in G. He say "Yes—but maybe I shan't find any I like so well as you." Den I say maybe he wouldn't like my ways, 'cause I'se an ole woman, and I hab four children by my first husband; and anybody marry me, must be jest kind to dem children as

dey was to me, else I couldn't lub him. L en he say, ef he had a woman 't had children—mind you he didn't say me—he would be just as kind to dem childr<sup>n</sup> as he was to de moder, and dat's 'cordin to how she a<sup>n</sup> by him. Well, so we went on from one ting to anoder, till 't last we say we'd take one anoder, and so we've libed to <sup>ex</sup>der eber since—and I'se had four children by him—and he neber slip away from me, nor I from him.'

"How are you married, in your yard?"

"We jest takes one anoder—we aks de white folk, leave—and den takes one anoder. Some folks, dey married by de book; but den, what's de use? Dere's my fus husband, we'se married by de book, and he sold way off to Florida, and I'se here. Dey wants to do what dey please wid us, so dey don't want us to be married. Dey don't care what we does, so we jest makes money for dem.

"My fus husband—he young and he bery kind to me—O Missis, he bery kind indeed. He set up all night and work, so as to make me comfortable. O, we got 'long bery well when I had him; but he sold way off Florida, and, sence then, Missis, I jest gone to noting. Dese yer white people dey habe here, dey won't 'low us noting—noting at all—jest gibs us food and two suits a year—a broad stripe and a narrow stripe; you'll see 'em, Missis.'

"And we did 'see 'em'; for Violet brought us the 'narrow stripe,' with a request that we would fit it for her. There was just enough to cover her, but no hooks and eyes, cotton, or even lining; these extras she must get as she can; and yet her master receives from our host eight dollars per month for her services. We asked how she got the 'broad stripe' made up.

"O Missis, my husband—he working now out on de

farm—so he hab 'lowance four pounds bacon and one peck of meal ebery week; so he stinge heself, so as to gib me four pounds bacon to pay for making my frock.'

"Once finding us all three busily writing, Violet stood for some moments silently watching the mysterious motion of our pens, and then, in a tone of deepest sadness, said:

" 'O! dat be great comfort, Missis. You can write to your friends all 'bout ebery ting, and so hab dem write to you. Our people can't do so. Wheder dey be 'libe or dead, we can't neber know—only sometimes we hears dey be dead.' "

"What more expressive comment," adds Mrs. Beecher Stowe, "on the cruel laws that forbid the slave to be taught to write!"

The history of the serving-man at the same hotel or boarding-house is given thus: "George's father and mother belonged to somebody in Florida. During the war [1812?] two older sisters got on board an English vessel and went to Halifax. His mother was very anxious to go with them and take the whole family; but her husband persuaded her to wait till the next ship sailed when he thought he might be able to go, too. By this delay, an opportunity of escape was lost and the whole family were soon after sold for debt. George, one sister, and their mother were bought by the same man. He says: 'My old boss cry powerful when she (the mother) die; say he'd rather lost two thousand dollars. She was part Indian—hair straight as yourn—and she was white as dat ar pillow.' George married a woman in another yard. He gave his reason for this—' 'Cause when a man sees his wife 'bused, he can't help feeling it. When he hears

his wife 'bused, 'tant like as how it is when he sees it. Then I can fadge for her better than when she's in my own yard.' This wife was sold up country some time after, but became lame and sick, so 'her master gabe her her time and paid her fare to G—.' 'Hadn't seen her for years,' said George, 'but soon as I heard of it went right down—hired a house and got someone to take care ob her—and used to go to see her ebery tree months.' He is a mechanic and sometimes worked all night to do this. His master asks twenty dollars per month for his services, and allows him fifty cents per week for clothes, etc. George says if he could only save by working nights enough to buy himself, he would get some one he could trust to buy him; 'den work hard as ever to buy my children, den I'd get away from dis 'ere. I want to go where I can belong to myself and do as I want to.' "

## II

The majority of the southern planters lived for the greater part of the year, if not for the whole of it, upon their estates. There were very few large towns south of the Potomac, and of these, Charleston and New Orleans alone could be called centres of society. In the great cities of the north, the southern gentry did not find themselves at home. An exception was Pierce Butler, a descendant of the Dukes of Ormond and the grandson of Senator Butler, from whom, jointly with his brother, he had inherited a considerable plantation of rice and sea-island cotton at the mouth of the Altamaha river in the

state of Georgia; he lived for the greater part of his time at Philadelphia, an uncongenial residence, one would suppose, for a slave-owner. At the beginning of 1834, he married Fanny Kemble, a talented English actress, the niece of Mrs. Siddons. When their first child was three or four years old, he took her to his ancestral domain. To Fanny Kemble, we owe a gloomy picture of a plantation which had been left for years in charge of an overseer.

She found the South slovenly, dull, uncivilised. Her sympathies were already enlisted on behalf of the slaves. She astonished them by forbidding them (ineffectually) to call her "missis" and tried to make them understand she claimed no right of ownership in them. The house servants were disgustingly dirty. The kitchen was constantly invaded by swarms of filthy negroes, like hungry hounds in search of scraps, which they devoured sitting on their hams. The servants had no regular meals or sleeping places. The slaves dwelt not in the neat, comfortable cottages seen by Basil Hall, but in mere wooden frames, twelve feet by fifteen, divided by thin partitions, each of which was inhabited by a family of from eight to ten persons.

In working hours, these were tenanted by a mob of crawling infants who were in the care of little girls under ten. When reproached by the "missis" with their dirtiness and their neglect of their charges the children protested their cabins were as clean as many houses of white people. A woman answered the same reproach by declaring that her work in the fields left her no time to attend to her baby. Mrs. Butler reported this to her husband, with the result that the woman was flogged by the overseer for telling tales.



Provision was made for the sick and for pregnant slaves on every plantation, slave-owners boasted. The hospital was visited by the Englishwoman. It was a dark filthy place where women in all stages of pregnancy and suffering, many of them, from loathsome diseases, lay on the bare ground, buried in tattered, greasy blankets. The women went back to field work within three weeks of their confinement. Notwithstanding, they bred like rabbits, and were glad of the respite from labour which their condition procured them. Mrs. Butler found not a girl of sixteen without children or a woman of thirty who was not a grandmother. They proudly exhibited their infants—"Look, missis! Little nigger for you and massa! Plenty little niggers for you and little missis!" "Though we ain't able to work," said one negress, "we make little niggers for massa."

The success of the estate largely depended on the efficient working of the steam mortars which shelled the rice. The machinery was in charge of a highly intelligent slave, spoken of as Engineer Ned. In Britain, even a hundred years ago, this man's skilled labour would have earned him a fairly decent home and a measure of comfortable respectability. His owner's wife found that he lived in the same way as the other slaves and that while he was directing his works, his wife was driven daily to her labour in the fields by the driver with his whip.

Mrs. Butler heard a great deal of the highly efficient management of the late overseer, to whom, according to the distressing fashion of her time, she refers as Mr. K. This man not only provided Pierce Butler with handsome dividends to spend in Philadelphia, but took care to replenish the stock of negroes. Betty, the pretty wife of

Frank, the head driver, had a boy named Renty whose straight features and diluted colour, no less than his troublesome, discontented and unsubmitive disposition, bore witness to his Yankee descent. "Is Frank your father?" Mrs. Butler could not forbear from enquiring. "No," said the boy, "Mr. K. was my father." "Who told you?" It was common knowledge, but the lad, though proud of his white blood, could not bring himself to put the question to his mother. On enquiry, it appeared that the overseer had borrowed the Head Man's wife and having kept her as his mistress for a while had returned her to her husband. Another driver, Bran, was pointed out as the overseer's half-brother. Presently, Mrs. Butler found it was indiscreet to point out "who resembled who." An ugly story was told her. When two slave women who had had children by the overseer lay in hospital, the man's wife turned them out, had them severely flogged, and sent to the swamp (the place of exile for refractory subjects) with orders they should be flogged every week. "Just conceive the fate of these unfortunate women," cries the actress, "torn between the passions of their masters and mistresses, each alike armed with power to oppress and torture them!" The very whip with which they were punished by the wife had possibly been used by the husband to coerce them into surrender to his lust. The women were asked by Mrs. Butler if they did not know that such a surrender was sinful. "We know, we know it," they cried, "but we do anything to get our poor flesh some rest from the whip; when he made me follow him into the bush, what use me to tell him no? He have strength to make me."

A girl, the offspring of such intercourse, applied to

the master's wife to be transferred from field work to the house, as more befitting her white blood. An American obsessed by race feeling, would have at least appreciated the grounds of this request; but the English woman confesses she was a little shocked by the wench's evident pride in her bastardy—not perceiving that her own prejudices were as unjust and absurd as the American's. She did not, however, indulge them, but evinced a lively and beneficent interest in other mulatto "bastards" about her husband's estate, in particular, in a pretty girl of fifteen named Daphne. What would become of her, she speculated; she might be worked to death. "In any of the southern cities, the girl would be pretty sure to be reserved for a worse fate." As in Jamaica, the mulatto and quadroon women were much in demand as mistresses and concubines for white men; which is strange in view of the American's professed repugnance to the negro. A southern lady, touched by a young man's desire for one of her slaves, a quadroon, good naturedly sold her to him for nine hundred and fifty dollars.

That the slaves should rejoice upon the birth of an heir to their owner and dread the hour of his decease struck Fanny Kemble as strange and even contemptible, till she realized that a lapse of ownership would almost certainly mean for them the break-up of their home and the disruption of their ties. Psyche, her mulatto nurse maid, called by the negroes "Sack," one day came running to her with the dreadful tidings that her husband Joe had been given as a present to an ex-overseer who was taking him to Alabama. With no little difficulty, Mrs. Butler prevailed on Joe's new owner to leave him behind and thus averted the separation of the pair.

A religion which regards promiscuous sexual intercourse as the deadliest of sins<sup>1</sup> must have been found highly inconvenient by the lords of the plantations. It was not encouraged on Pierce Butler's property. A slave was flogged for letting his wife get baptized without first asking his owner's permission. The black people were, however, allowed to attend services presided over by a white Baptist preacher at the neighbouring village of Darien. Their owners did not like them to meet slaves from other estates. The obvious policy of slaveholding was to keep the negroes segregated as far as possible. It was an offence to teach them to read or write, and when Mrs. Butler discovered a slave who could do both, he refused to let her know who had taught him.

A negro ball which she attended and which procured her considerable amusement, affords the only relief to the gloom of Fanny Kemble's narrative. An American writer describes her as irritable and meddlesome. One is not surprised to read that her husband declined to receive from her any petitions on behalf of his bondsmen; nor that she divorced him and resumed her maiden name in the year 1848. The dissolution which the slaves so much dreaded overtook them in 1859, when they were sold, to the number of 429, to defray Pierce Butler's debts.

It may be, as certain modern apologists of slavery insist, that his was a notoriously ill-managed plantation; but the worst evils which it revealed to his wife's eyes were incidental to the "peculiar institution" all over the south. There, as in the British West Indies, the slave woman had no defence at all against the appetites of her

<sup>1</sup> Augustine of Hippo, who held slavery to be lawful, thought this.

white masters. "I send my sons away to be educated," a southerner told Olmsted, "They might as well be brought up in a brothel as on a plantation." On the Guinea coast, the black man who sold his own children was branded with infamy. The peculiar horror of slavery under the English-speaking peoples was that white men did sell their children or allowed them to be sold. "On every plantation," said the witness, just quoted, "you may see the late owner's children cowering under the lash of the overseer." It is true that in most European countries fathers were not under any obligation at all to save their natural children from starvation, and that under an alteration in the law of England effected by the infamous Eldon, a son born in wedlock had an interest in defaming his own mother in order to disinherit an elder brother born perhaps a few days before his parents were married; but under the regime of American slavery, the law stepped in to prevent a man's fulfilling the obligations of nature. In South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, a slave could not be freed except by special legislation. A slave unlawfully set free by his owner was seized and sold by the sheriff to the highest bidder. Even those who were "lawfully" emancipated were compelled to quit the state within thirty days. The original aim of this iniquitous legislation was, of course, to prevent the creation of a free coloured population, and to achieve it, the whites, with a singular perversion of the race prejudice, doomed to ignominy and servitude those in whose veins their own blood ran. If the crack of the whip had never been heard on the plantations and every slave had received a pound a day for his labour, the whole system of American slavery

would have been, notwithstanding, revealed as infamous by such a case as was reported in a New York paper by the poet, William Cullen Bryant.

“A man of the name of Elisha Brazealle, a planter in Jefferson County, Mississippi, was attacked by a loathsome disease. During his illness, he was faithfully nursed by a mulatto slave, to whose assiduous attentions he felt that he owed his life. He was duly impressed by her devotion, and soon after his recovery, took her to Ohio (a free state) and had her educated. She was very intelligent and improved her advantages so rapidly that when he visited her again, he determined to marry her. He executed a deed for her emancipation, and had it recorded in both the states of Ohio and Mississippi and made her his wife.

“Mr. Brazealle, returned with her to Mississippi, and in process of time, had a son. After a few years, he sickened and died, leaving a will in which, after reciting the deed of emancipation, he declared his intention to ratify it, and devised all his property to this lad, acknowledging him in the will to be such.

“Some poor and distant relations in North Carolina, whom he did not know and for whom he did not care, hearing of his death, came on to Mississippi and claimed the property thus devised. They instituted a suit for its recovery, and the case (it is reported in Howard, Mississippi Reports, vol. ii, p. 837) came before Judge Sharkey. He declared the act of emancipation an offence against morality, and pernicious and detestable as an example. He set aside the will, gave the property to Brazealle’s distant relatives, condemned Brazealle’s son and his wife, that son’s mother, again to bondage, and made

them the slaves of those North Carolina kinsmen, as parts of the assets of the estate."

The mother, it will have been noted, was a mulatto; the son, therefore, had three white grandparents to one black. He, to all intents and purposes, a white boy, accustomed to regard himself as his father's heir, was handed over to be flogged and treated as a chattel by people who had most reason for having a spite against him.

The lawyer's record in regard to the slave is a bad one. Even Mansfield pronounced his momentous judgment with obvious reluctance and Stowell, worthy brother of Eldon, did his best to limit its operation.

If Brazealle had left a daughter instead of a son, she might have been used as a concubine by one of her kinsmen, as a result of Judge Sharkey's vindication of morality. Or, exposed on the auction block at New Orleans, she might have commanded a high price. In 1841, a girl named Sarah was sold in that city in the rotunda of the St. Louis Hotel for eight thousand dollars. Possibly, she may be identified with the slave Sarah, "aged about twenty-eight, benevolent face, fine teeth, and speaking English and French," who was advertised for, as a runaway, some ten years later. Phillips states on the authority of a New Orleans newspaper that her sale at this high figure was purely formal and that few purchases for the purpose of concubinage can be established by authentic records. How so many persons of mixed blood ("smeared with the tar-brush" or "with a dash of whitewash," whichever way you like to put it) came to be seen in the South, he does not explain. It can hardly be supposed that the white

who wanted a mulatto mistress would refrain from buying a girl of unusual beauty if he could afford her price. A girl Amelia, aged thirteen, was raffled for at New Orleans in 1819, the tickets being priced at twenty dollars. The following account by an eye-witness of a sale is extracted from "a newspaper" (not specified): "A beautiful young woman is on the auction block. Despair sits on her countenance. Then fell upon mine ear the auctioneer's cry, 'How much is said for this beautiful, healthy girl—a fancy girl for any gentleman? How much—how much? Who bids?' 'Five hundred dollars.' 'Eight hundred.' 'A thousand' were soon bid by different purchasers. The crier then read from a bill of sale, describing the girl. 'She is intelligent—well formed—easy to communicate. Who raises the bid?' 'Twelve hundred' shouted one, 'Sixteen hundred,' cried two others. He read again, 'She bears a good moral character—is perfectly trustworthy—and is a devoted christian.' 'Two thousand,' shouted one; and at that price she was struck off."<sup>1</sup>

On a certain day in April 1848, the liberty-loving and slave-owning Americans of Washington beflagged the city in celebration of the downfall of monarchy in France. A tyrant like Louis Philippe was properly odious to these republicans who held a whole race in bondage and only occasionally sold their own children. Senator Foote of Mississippi harangued the multitude and announced the age of tyrants and slavery to be rapidly drawing to a close. Hearing this, a party of seventy-seven slaves, some black, some with a liberal dash of whitewash, seized the occasion to make their escape from the capital of liberty on the schooner *Pearl*. Captain Drayton, the master, "had listened to the addresses on

<sup>1</sup> H. C. Wright, *American Slavery*, Edinburgh, 1845.



Pennsylvania Avenue, and thought in the innocence of his heart that a man who really *did* something to promote universal emancipation was no worse than the men who only made speeches about it." He hid the refugees in the hold of his vessel and dropped down the river two hundred miles. There, unfortunately, the schooner was becalmed. At two o'clock at night, the *Pearl* was boarded by an armed gang who had pursued her in a steamer. The fugitives were taken back to the federal capital and marched through the streets to the gaol, amid such demonstrations of hatred and indignation as might be expected from an American mob—at least in those days. The owners of the runaways made haste to sell them to the south. Lynching, of course, was esteemed the proper fate for the brave captain and mate, but the police threw them into gaol instead of into the jaws of the wild beasts. Drayton was treated with extreme severity and not released till the year 1852.

Among those taking part in the attempt were an interesting family of the name of Edmondson, of whom Mrs. Beecher Stowe has much to say. They were at last redeemed and re-united in New York. But a young quadroon girl named Emily Russell, the daughter of a freedwoman living in New York, was not redeemed. She was sold by way of punishment to a firm of slave-dealers called Bruin and Hill. The price of her redemption was fixed at eighteen hundred dollars. "This," wrote the slave-dealers, "may seem a high price to you, but cotton being very high, consequently slaves are high. We have two or three offers for Emily from gentlemen in the south. She is said to be the finest-looking woman in this country." The wretched mother could not scrape

the dollars together. The girl started on the long overland journey. She died by the way. Hearing this, the mother clasped her hands and cried, "The Lord be thanked! He has heard my prayers at last."

In the United States, so deeply tinged with puritanism, the system of slavery still finds, even at the present time, half-hearted apologists and defenders. In many quarters may be detected a tendency to exaggerate what little good there was in it and to ignore its worse aspects. Woodrow Wilson who essayed to teach us Europeans righteousness, said "slavery was not so dark a thing as it was painted."<sup>1</sup> What we hear in our own day of the chain gangs of Georgia and the all too frequent lynching of negroes does not reveal any great depths of tenderness in the southern whites; but they may have degenerated since they ceased to own slaves. Another authority will have it that "every plantation of the standard southern type" (which in Olmsted's hearing was described as little better than a brothel) "was, in fact, a school constantly training and controlling pupils who were in a backward state of civilization. . . . The slave plantation regime did at least as much as *any system possible in the period* towards adapting the bulk of them to life in a civilized community."<sup>2</sup> Another system possible and actually in operation at that period and on that continent was the Spanish. Our authority does not tell us why in order to fit the slaves for life in a civilized community, it was necessary to discourage family life among them, to forbid their instruction in reading and writing and, in some states, in useful handicrafts, and to deny the status of

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. 7, p. 441.

<sup>2</sup> U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 1918.

white folk to the children and grandchildren of the whites themselves; or, to make incest at least a probable incident of plantation life. The obligation assumed by so many generations of Americans of reconciling republican institutions with the existence of slavery, and Christian professions with the denial of religious instruction to millions of human beings, has given generally a warp to the American mind which is still very apparent.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES

#### I

A CENTURY before Oglethorpe forbade the holding of men in slavery in his newly-created Georgia, the founder of the colony of Rhode Island decreed that no man, black or white, within its narrow confines should continue in bondage for more than ten years. The constitutions of Roger Williams were observed no more faithfully than those of Oglethorpe. Englishmen's liberties, Disraeli boasted, were five hundred years older than the Rights of Man, and while the emigrants from our shores were entirely ignorant of the latter, they saw no reason for extending the former to people, other than themselves, overseas or at home. It was the religious not the civic conscience which was first troubled by the sight of men and women held in bondage and denied the waters of baptism. In 1688, the Quakers of Germantown in their yearly meeting protested against the buying, selling and holding of men in slavery. The name of the town (now a suburb of Philadelphia) whence this protest was dated is significant. Pennsylvania was largely settled by Germans, and to that people the institution was hateful and unfamiliar. The sentiment fostered in Penn's colony spread across the borders. In 1746, John Woolman, a New Jersey Quaker, visited Virginia and the

southern plantations and strove to arouse sympathy for the enslaved blacks. At Newport, Rhode Island, which had become the entrepôt of the American slave trade, Samuel Hopkins, a courageous Congregationalist minister, persuaded his community to exclude slave-owners from membership. The friends adopted the resolutions of the English meetings, and Dr. Benezet, a member of the Philadelphia community, corresponded with Granville Sharp, with a view to a more extended campaign against slavery.

Upon a short view, it might appear that the continuance of slavery in America was prolonged as a consequence of the colonies having separated from the mother country. On the contrary, the home government, in 1833, might well have shrunk from the heroic step of emancipation if it had been faced with the opposition, not only of the politically weak sugar islands, but of the powerful provinces of the mainland which had also become dependent on slave labour. If it had insisted, the march through Georgia might have been accomplished by a red-coated army commanded by one of Wellington's lieutenants. At the time of the Revolution, the prospects of the slave were, on the whole, rather more favourable in North America than in Britain. Only Georgia and South Carolina were strong for the retention of slavery. George Washington, as has been said, saw no advantage in its continuance. Alexander Hamilton was secretary of the New York society for its abolition. Societies for the same purpose existed not only in Pennsylvania but in Maryland and Virginia. Slavery was forbidden in the territory north-west of the Ohio. The sea-board slave trade was to cease on the first day of the year 1808.

The emancipation of the slaves is an episode in the history of Great Britain; in the history of the United States, it is a serial story filling many long and stirring chapters. This is not the place to present even a summary of those chapters. The English reader may, perhaps, be profitably reminded that from the start, the southern states had a political as well as an economic interest in the perpetuation of slavery, since their voting strength in Congress was based on the number not only of their electors, but of their slave population. White emigrants poured into the north, not into the south, which thus depended for her political power on her helpless, voteless, inarticulate inhabitants. The ultimate conflict was not a war to end slavery, but a fight between the slaveholding states and the non-slave-holding states. Manifestly, that conflict might have been averted and the voting power of the southern states gone undiminished if they had taken the course of making their slaves free-men; but that was to southerners unthinkable. They were hopelessly outnumbered by the blacks, they feared and despised them, and upon the introduction of the rice and cotton industries, they found they needed them more than ever. A clause empowering them to pursue and recapture their runaway slaves anywhere throughout the Union was incorporated in the constitution.

By the dawn of the nineteenth century, the position and the prospects of the slave were perceptibly worsened. Jefferson and other founders of the Union by their platonic disapprobation of slavery, had merely alarmed the southerners, whose fears were aggravated by the establishment of a nation of free negroes in Haiti. Obstinate, they refused to sanction the official recog-

nition of the new republic. They would not have black ambassadors and black consuls parading before their slaves the triumph of a servile insurrection. England was now free soil and the existence of slavery in her sugar islands was threatened. In 1793, in Upper Canada, it was decreed that all slaves born after a certain date should be free; French Canada passed a similar enactment in 1800. Here on the Continent which the white man had stolen from the Indian and on which he had maintained his hold mainly by the black man's labour, existed a land where all men went free.

Even in the northern states, by the year 1810 sentiment against slavery had declined. Politicians knew that it was a rock on which the Union might split and preferred to sail round it. If the more intelligent working people thought about the question at all, they might not unreasonably have apprehended the influx of freed black men into the factories which now studded the north. There was a growing disposition to leave the south to manage its own affairs. The Quakers were accused of fomenting discord. The outbreak of war with England in 1812, lent, even, an unpatriotic colour to their activities, since England, it was evident to all the world, had set her face against slavery. Upon the conclusion of hostilities, the United States commissioners demanded that a number of slaves who had taken refuge on a British warship in Chesapeake Bay should be returned to their owners. The year 1815 was not a favourable time for attempting to bully British seamen. The captain refused to surrender the runaways and was supported in his refusal by the admiral commanding the station. The British naval attaché at Washington, on being appealed

to, adhered to the same attitude. So did the governor of the Bermudas where the slaves were landed. He would rather see the islands sunk beneath the waves, he declared, than give up any one who had taken refuge under the British flag. The exasperated Americans referred the case to the court of St. James's and got no satisfaction out of Castlereagh. Ultimately, the republicans submitted their claim to the Autocrat of All the Russias, upon whose award we contemptuously paid the slavers twelve million dollars blood-money. Thus, bitterly complains a northern man, did the southerners drag the honour of the United States through the mud, invoking the good offices of the traditional enemy of democracy. We British, however, have reason to thank them for so glorious a passage in our history. A star was taken from the American flag and shone upon our own.

It pleased the southerner to treat his slaves as something less than human beings, but those slaves had ears to hear like other men. In their senates, the torrential garrulity of the gentlemen from Virginia and Georgia astonished strangers; presumably, they aired their grievances at their own tables with the like verbosity and vehemence of expression. Their attendants got to know there were lands where black men were not slaves. In the ports, they caught rumours of new republics far to the south where Spanish-speaking negroes and Spanish-speaking whites were citizens together. In 1829, a free negro named Walker, printed and published a book protesting against the enslavement of his kind. In Virginia there lived in slavery a man named Nat Turner, whose sense of the wrong done his race had been quickened by brooding over the Bible. Being not only a negro but an



American, he easily persuaded himself that he had a message from the Most High and that he was the person designated in the Hebrew writings to lead his people out of the land of bondage. The slaves in Southampton county rose at his summons. The insurrection began by the killing of Turner's owner and his family. Sixty-one whites and over a hundred blacks were slain before it was suppressed. Not satisfied with the executions that followed, a local paper, *The Richmond Whig*, vowed that another such uprising must result in the whole coloured race being put to the sword.

While inevitably the slaves in consequence of this and other risings were more harshly treated than before, Randolph, a politician, proposed to expel all negroes from the United States by the year 1840. But the slave had by now become far too valuable a species of property to be thus disposed of. An American Colonization Society had been founded in 1816, with the object of transplanting all the freed blacks to Africa. As a result of the society's efforts, the republic of Liberia was founded on the Guinea coast in 1821. That the scheme was primarily intended not to end slavery but to make it more secure was perceived by Wilberforce, Clarkson and Stephen, as well as by the growing band of American abolitionists. Every free negro in the United States was rightly regarded as a menace by the slave-holders. Security lay in teaching the negro that bondage was his natural and inevitable condition.

Disregarding the denunciations of President Jackson, the Quakers in the north strove to awaken the conscience of Americans to the iniquity carried on under the protection of their constitution and their flag. Benjamin

Lundy of New Jersey, in 1815, organized an anti-slavery movement in Ohio. William Lloyd Garrison, a young printer of Boston, used his craft to demand immediate and total abolition. He became editor of a paper founded by Lundy. Both were soon driven out of Boston and forced to take refuge in the national capital. Garrison was soon scorched by the fires of persecution. Released from a term of imprisonment to which he was sentenced for having attacked a notorious shipper of slaves, he carried the new gospel through New England. He established the famous abolitionist organ, *The Liberator*, in Boston in 1831.

In that year, "the nation reached its nadir. . . . The dark cloud of slavery rolled heavily across the Mississippi," into the newly organized territories of the west.<sup>1</sup> Garrison dauntlessly carrying the brand of war into the enemy's country, for a time tasted the bitter bread of a Georgia gaol. Rewards were publicly offered in southern newspapers for the abduction and delivery in the south of the more prominent abolitionists. It is surprising the reward was not earned. In New England, the friends of the negro were assailed as violently as in the south. The mobs that broke up abolitionist meetings at New York, Boston, Montpelier and New Haven, were probably animated by nothing more than that irrational hatred of a just cause which inspired so much of the opposition in our own times and country to the advocates of women's suffrage. Race prejudice, a religion among the ignorant, is enough to account for the persecution of Miss Crundall in Connecticut for opening a school for young ladies *and coloured missies*. The lady was thrown into prison, released and compelled to leave the state. Her school was

<sup>1</sup> H. Wilson. *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in the United States*.

demolished. A college for the education of negroes was pulled down by the crowd at New Haven. In Cincinnati, the presses of the abolitionist paper *The Philanthropist* were smashed and the staff driven away. The coloured people were hunted like wild beasts through the streets. When the tumult had subsided, they enquired if they might settle in the British dominions. The reply of Sir Joseph Colebrooke, the governor of Upper Canada, is worth recording: "Tell your republicans that we royalists do not know a man by his colour. If they choose to settle in Canada, the coloured people of Cincinnati will be assured of the protection of the laws which is extended to all the King's subjects."

The citizens of the United States enjoyed no protection if their sentiments happened to conflict with those of the populace. At St. Louis, Missouri, in 1837, a black man for having stabbed the policeman who came to arrest him, was slowly roasted to death by a mob. Elijah Lovejoy, the editor of a religious newspaper, dared to protest against this atrocity. His house was at once besieged by ruffians armed with bludgeons and bowie knives. They were repelled by Lovejoy's wife, but returned to the assault. The threatened man took refuge at Alton in the "free" state of Illinois. There encouraged by Beecher, the husband of the author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," he determined to set up his press and continue the publication of his journal. Persisting in his design, in spite of warnings from the town authorities, he was shot dead in the act of defending his press against a pro-slavery mob. His murder went unavenged.

In law-abiding England, Wilberforce and Clarkson

waited for parliament to emancipate the slaves. We do not hear of their fitting out ships to attack the slavers or to carry off negroes from the West Indian plantations. It is the glory of the American abolitionists that they would not submit to evil because it had constitutional sanction and that they broke the law as often and as deliberately as their opponents. While their ultimate fate was being debated in Congress and men like Garrison, Birney, Channing and Beecher proclaimed their wrongs, the slaves were living and working and dying in slavery. After all, if you think a man is wrongly imprisoned, the best thing to do is to set him free. The Christians of New England, to their eternal credit, did not, like St. Paul, tell the runaway slave to go back to his master. They helped him to get to Canada, and those still in bondage they urged to run away. Washington spoke of people who were more disposed to facilitate the escape of a slave than to apprehend him. At Philadelphia, there were householders who let it be known to their fellow-sympathisers that they were prepared to harbour fugitives and speed them on their way. Year by year, the number of these refuges grew till the organisation known as the Underground Railway came into being.<sup>1</sup> Northerners with abolitionist opinions travelled in the south, some as ordinary business men, some as pedlars, some, like Ross, as naturalists upon scientific expeditions, and spread among the slave population a knowledge of Canada, that land under the north star where slaves went free. The work had to be artfully done—the information never directly communicated, but dropped as if inadvertently in the negro's hearing. Early in the day, the planters suspected the existence of such an organiza-

<sup>1</sup> Siebert, *The Underground Railway from Slavery*, 1893.

tion and every visitor from the northern states was closely watched. Purposely in the hearing of their slaves, they would refer to Canada as a terrible land of perpetual ice and snow, three thousand miles away, where birds dropped dead of cold out of the air; boats putting out onto the great lakes, they said with a glance at the black man behind their chair, were blown round in a circle and always came back to the port whence they sailed. The slaves knew very well the reason for this talk. Most of them knew, too, which was the north star; by following the Mississippi itself or the rivers and the wild mountain ranges which ran north, they would at last reach the free states, on the other side of which lay the promised land. Once the address of the first "station" on the "line" was communicated to the intending runaway, perhaps by a Yankee stranger talking as if in his sleep, his route would be shown him stage by stage. Usually he journeyed by night. He would be given food and shelter and money enough to enable him to reach his next destination. The organisers of the Underground had their secret code and passwords. By a sound like the cry of an owl, some lonely dweller by the Ohio might be warned of the approach of a body of fugitives and make haste to get out his boat to ferry them across. The flight of a woman slave, pursued by men and hounds, across the frozen Ohio, described by Mrs. Beecher Stow in her anti-slavery classic, took place in fact at Ripley, fifty miles above Cincinnati. The passing of the amended Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 increased the penalty for harbouring a runaway slave from five hundred to a thousand dollars and a term of imprisonment not to exceed six months. Even in the so-called free states,

therefore, the abolitionists were for their own sakes as well as their fugitives' obliged to resort to every method of concealment. They contrived secret chambers in their houses. At one station, a whole party of negroes could be hidden in the middle of a wood-pile. A whole family were abducted and carried out of the slave country, hidden in a wagon beneath a load of straw. At one point it was urgently necessary to get a party out of the town in daylight. They left, unsuspected, in a train of funeral coaches, as if following the bier of a departed friend.

The introduction of railways helped the cause of freedom. Negroes were placed in boxes and consigned as freight to safe addresses in the North. In 1849, a box measuring three feet by two was forwarded by the Adams Express Company from Richmond to Philadelphia. From it safely emerged Henry Box Brown, a runaway slave, who had passed twenty-four hours in transit. There were sea captains, like Drayton, who would smuggle fugitives out of the accursed country and land them at Halifax. Captain Walker was caught by the slavers and branded on the cheek with the letters SS (slave-stealer).

In 1858, a good-looking mulatto girl had reached the last stage but one on the way to freedom, when it was found that her master with a posse of detectives was hot on her heels. Under cover of the darkness she was hurried to another house close by, from which she emerged, dressed in bonnet, veil and crinoline, like a white lady of fashion, and accompanied by a white nurse maid with a white baby. The human accessories were, of course, members of the family with which she had taken refuge. They took seats in the train for Detroit. In the same car

was seated the girl's master who was also on his way to Detroit, in the hope of intercepting her as she attempted to leave the country. In the elegant white lady, busy with her baby, he failed to recognize his slave, nor did he penetrate her disguise when she passed him on the landing stage. On board the boat, her attendant took the baby from her and returned to the shore. When the gang plank was withdrawn and the steamer putting out into the lake, the lady raised her veil and gave her late tyrant a parting glance. He betrayed the reason for his astonishment and anger to the bystanders, considerably to their amusement.

To Canadians it should be a proud reflection that for close on seventy years their country afforded an inviolable asylum to the most oppressed race on earth. At the Canadian frontier freedom bade the slave-hunter with his bloodhounds halt. Thus far, he read, and no farther. A fleet of lake steamers owned by General Reid conveyed fugitives free. Captain Chapman commanding a steamer on Lake Erie was asked by an acquaintance in Cleveland, Ohio, to put ashore two persons on the Canadian side. They were, as he had expected, negroes. He paid little attention to them till he ran in close to the Canadian shore, manned a boat, and landed them on the strand. They said, "Is this Canada?" He told them that it was and that there were no slaves in that country. He then saw something which he said he would never forget. "They seemed to be transformed; a new light shone in their eyes, their tongues were loosed, they laughed and cried, prayed and sang praises, fell upon the ground and kissed it, crying 'Bress the Lord. Oh, I'se free before I die!'"

They had every chance to start life afresh. The government and people of Canada were friendly and agencies were formed to place the refugees on the land and to find them jobs. Goods addressed to them were allowed to go free through the Canadian customs.

It is to the credit of African nature that those who had made good their escape did not forget those left behind. John Mason and Harriet Tubman, both runaway slaves, took a prominent part in abducting slaves. Both were willing to forfeit their dearly acquired liberty that their fellows might win theirs. Mason went back to the south and was guiding a party of fugitives when they were run to earth by the hounds and soon surrounded by armed desperadoes. Mason put up a stout resistance, but was overpowered and sent as a slave to New Orleans. Eighteen months later he was back in Canada. Once a slave had trodden that road, he might be trusted always to find it again. Harriet Tubman, a negro woman, was called the Moses of her people, for leading so many of them out of bondage into the promised land. During the Civil War she rendered valuable services to the Union cause both as a spy and as an attendant in the hospitals.

But it is a long way from the south to Canada and all fugitives were not so fortunate as these. In January 1856, the frozen Ohio was crossed by a party composed of four adult negroes and four children. They took refuge in a friendly negro's hut, but were followed by the slavers and overpowered after a desperate resistance. One woman killed her child before they surrendered; another, on the way back into Kentucky, jumped overboard into the river with her child clasped in her



arms. She was recovered alive, but her child was drowned.

Since her owner had been at such pains to recover her, the wretched mother may not have been sent to the gallows. The rage of the south burned more fiercely against the friends of the slaves than the slaves themselves. Spies were employed to track the agents of the Underground Railway. One planter, in search of a runaway, disguised himself as a Quaker, to be unmasked by the small boy whom he was questioning as to his father's doings. Three abolitionists were decoyed and kidnapped. Thompson, an Englishman, abducted from a free state, served three and a half years in a Missouri penitentiary for "slave-stealing." Torrey, prominent in the cause, died in a Maryland gaol. Garrett was ruined by fines inflicted on him by Justice Taney. Northern men suspected of abolitionist sympathies were stripped and flogged by vigilance committees in the southern states. Meanwhile, the church which Wesley had founded, enjoined silence on the subject of slavery. Christ and his apostles, it was observed, had uniformly recognized the "relation of master and servant." "The principle of holding the heathen in bondage," wrote the Rev. Thomas Witherspon, an elder of the Presbyterian community, "is recognized by God."

In the northern states men were no longer so sure about that. Public opinion in that part of the Union by the middle of the century had become hostile to slavery. One reason, not hitherto assigned for this, may have been the influx of refugees from Europe imbued with the revolutionary ideals of 1848. The steamship, too, had fretought slave-holding America within a fortnight's

reach of anti-slavery Britain. The nation could no longer shield itself from the fiery breath of criticism. The railways carried curious observers into the very strongholds of slavery. The internal combustion engine will one day free the horse from its awful servitude. In the screech of the first locomotive which traversed the plantations, the south might have heard civilization's warning and defiance. Even short-sighted men realized that the north had grown passionately impatient of the dictation of the slave-breeders. The enforcement of the new Fugitive Slave Act aroused a tempest of indignation in the free states. Anthony Burns, a runaway slave, could only be seized in Boston at the cost of an officer's life. To withstand another attempt at rescue by the outraged New Englanders, he had to be escorted to the ship by a powerful force of troops and police. Loring, the judge who sanctioned Burns's rendition in obedience to the federal law, became odious to the people of Massachusetts and was removed from the bench of the state. In Virginia, the press admitted that another such victory might prove too costly. In Philadelphia, a girl, Miss Palmer, with her own hands barred the entrance of her father's house to the United States Marshal, to permit the escape of a fugitive. The governor of Ohio had to be summoned by the Supreme Court of the United States to extradite a coloured man charged with assisting slaves in Kentucky to escape. In this struggle the state of Wisconsin covered itself with glory. Its citizens delivered a runaway named Glover from the hands of the federal officers and put him across the Canadian border. Pitched battles took place between the sheriffs' posses and the marshals. The Supreme Court of Wisconsin ruled that

the Fugitive Slave Act was unconstitutional and forbade the state authorities to assist in its enforcement. The governor entreated the president to call off his bloodhounds. There was ominous talk about state rights in Wisconsin. In Kansas, free-soil men and slavers were at open war. John Brown, since immortalized, with a valiant band invaded Missouri, and having routed a vastly superior force of enemies, successfully carried a party of slaves across the ice-bound river and despatched them to the Queen's dominions.

The southerners were as stupid as the slave-holders of the West Indies. Men with a scintilla of common sense would have realized by the middle of the nineteenth century that the world was dead against slavery. Instead of pursuing their prey onto their disgusted neighbours' preserves, they should have drawn a cordon tightly round their borders, stiffened their police organization, and resigned themselves to the loss of such slaves as got away in spite of these precautions. They preferred their Gadarene course. Preston Brooks, a southern representative, savagely assaulted Sumner, an abolitionist senator, in the library of Congress, and was voted the thanks of his constituents. The revival of the sea-borne slave traffic with Africa was openly advocated in the south, and the project only dropped because of the certainty of a resulting war with England. The slavers found evil counsellors in high places. In 1857, Dred Scott, a negro then the property of a man named Sandford claimed his freedom on the ground that he had acquired the status of a freeman in virtue of having lived in the free state of Illinois. In the Supreme Court of the United States, they pronounced a momentous decision. He dis-

missed Scott's claim, declared him to be still a slave and as such incapable of pleading or bringing suit in an American court. Negroes, affirmed this Maryland jurist, had always been excluded from the comity of nations; they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect, and they might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. The judge was a Roman Catholic and seems to have been applying to human beings the doctrine laid down by his church in regard to animals. But he did not stop here: as far back as 1820, by a compact known as the Missouri compromise, it had been agreed that slavery should not be introduced into the territory acquired by the Louisiana Purchase, west of the Mississippi, north of the parallel  $36^{\circ} 30'$  N., parts of Missouri itself excepted. The court now ruled, two of its members dissenting, that this compromise was unconstitutional, that Congress had no power to forbid slavery in the territories, and that this power belonged only to properly admitted states.

This decision made war inevitable. Abolitionists and free labourers saw in prospect the vast newly-opened areas extending to the Pacific turned into one great preserve for slaves. The plea of half-hearted northern politicians, like Douglas, to leave slavery and the south alone, died on their lips. The heroic John Brown, goaded to frenzy by the pretensions of the slavers and the hesitating policy of their opponents, determined to unloose the servile war. At the head of "his nineteen men so true," of whom fourteen were white and five black, he entered the town of Harper's Ferry in Virginia, on the night of October 16th, 1859, seized the United States Armoury, cut the telegraph wires, and took possession

of the railway station. He told the slaves they were free and called on them to rise against their oppressors. As well might such an appeal be addressed to the horses on the roads!—the slaves could not read, communication between the different plantations was rigorously restricted, few negroes knew their way to any place outside the next parish. For thirty hours, Brown waited in vain. He might easily have made his escape into the mountains, but he elected to withstand the attack of a force of United States Marines commanded by Lee, afterwards a rebel general. Wounded in several places, he was at last captured with six of his followers. Eight others were killed and five escaped. All the prisoners were hanged, meeting their fate with the firmness and dignity of martyrs. “I am quite certain,” said the hero before his execution, “that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged but by blood.” Victor Hugo declared: “slaughtered by the American republic, this crime assumes the proportions of the nation which has committed it.”

On November 6th, 1860, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois was elected president of the United States. His abolitionist sympathies were less lively than the southerners imagined; but speaking on March 5th he had pronounced slavery to be morally wrong. South Carolina would not wait for his inauguration, but seceded from the Union, to be followed by the other states between the Potomac and the Rio Grande. Had any other candidate than Lincoln been successful, it is not inconceivable that the example of secession might have been given by Wisconsin and the Union been disrupted by a north-western confederacy of free states.

The four years war began. Lincoln said, and we are sorry he said it, that if he could save the Union without freeing a single slave, he would do it. Never quite sure what could be done with the negro, lacking the apostolic zeal of Garrison and Lowell, dominated by what seemed to him the major necessity of healing the breach in the nation, he wavered and halted in the path towards emancipation. For the majority of those in power in the northern states, slavery was still only a minor issue. Equally, they blamed the south for rebelling and the abolitionists for having driven them into rebellion. While John Brown's soul went marching on before the Union armies, the slaves still crouched beneath the driver's whip, wondering what was to become of them. In the border states, United States troops were even employed as slave-catchers. Learning this, two companies of Germans in a Massachusetts regiment refused to march unless they were given a pledge they should never be employed in so discreditable a duty. Their protest was endorsed by the whole German community (many of whom were old '48 revolutionaries), and Congress obtained an order from the President, dated May 14th, 1862, which forbade officers and men to return slaves to their owners. Lincoln played with the idea of compensation and recommended the coloured people to migrate. Slaves were employed by the Confederates in throwing up fortifications round Richmond and Vicksburg. A Union general therefore hit on the happy solution of proclaiming slaves in the rebels' possession contraband of war and liable to be seized and taken within the Union lines. Not till January 1st, 1863, did the President issue his famous proclamation emancipating all

slaves in the seceded states, a decree which left many thousands in bondage in Maryland, Kentucky and elsewhere. Well might the trembling blacks, deafened by the clash of arms and scared by the passing of trampling hosts, ask which was friend and which was foe. Thousands, indeed, enlisted in the Federal army and fought for their own freedom, but for the most part, during the first half of the war period, they remained quiet, many of them accompanying their masters as servants in the field. Louis Hughes, among others, would not wait. He slipped away from the plantation to the nearest Federal camp and enlisted the aid of two soldiers. They returned with him, rode boldly up to his master's house, ordered him to let his slaves go, and escorted a party of them back to their lines.<sup>1</sup>

General Milroy, an ardent abolitionist, on entering the Shenandoah Valley, circulated a proclamation headed *Freedom to Slaves*. Though the negroes could not read, every one within the district understood what this meant, and every one, even the most devoted and trusted personal servants, asserted their freedom. These people had an idea that if by a single act or word they appeared to acquiesce in their servitude, they would lose the benefit of the proclamation—an idea which seems to have been borrowed from some story in their Jewish Bible about slaves going free after six years servitude, unless they allowed their masters to bore a hole in their ear when they became slaves for ever more. The house servants stayed not even to light the accustomed fires or cook the breakfast of their late owners, but gathered up their few belongings and presented themselves at the appointed place for despatch to the north by the empty trains

<sup>1</sup> Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave*.

behind the Union lines. But there was no bitterness in this part of Virginia in the parting between the slaves and their owners. The whites seemed rather to pity these childish utterly inexperienced folk going out into a strange world; the blacks cast a sorrowing glance back at the poor Ole Massa or Missis who would now for the first time in their lives have to work for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The news of the proclamation spread. Sherman's army in its march to the sea was accompanied by trains of slaves, many carrying their bedding and few possessions in bundles on their heads or backs, who confidently expected to follow the troops to immediate liberty. "Their disappointment was sincere and deep when told they must return to their homes. Of course, some never returned, but the mass of them did and remained until the final decision of the war was entered and their chains fell off."

Upon the approaching break-up of the Confederacy, the slaves in some places are described as wild with joy and revenge. At Beaufort, South Carolina, they declared their masters had shot them down like dogs because they refused to go away with them. Sherman did what he could for the relief and organisation of the derelicts and was ably and devotedly assisted by helpers from the North.

On the eve of the fall of Richmond, a slave was asked by his master if he would fight for him. "Yes," he answered, then went away to pray God to forgive him for saying what he did not mean. The same man speaks of the rejoicings of the slave population when the United States troops marched into the capital of the

<sup>1</sup> Kiefer, *Slavery and Four Years of War*, 1900.



Confederacy and the pro-slavery rebellion was at an end.<sup>1</sup>

At last, Lincoln felt able to proclaim his convictions. Millions of slaves had already been set at liberty. To coerce them back into bondage would have meant a fresh civil war; that the few who had not broken their fetters should remain slaves of the rebels was unthinkable. Yet the amendment which the President proposed, emancipating the whole servile population, was rejected by the besotted House of Representatives and had to be sent back to them with an earnest plea for re-consideration. Even the most inveterate pro-slaver knew now that the wicked old system must end. The thirteenth amendment to the constitution was passed by Congress and, having received the necessary support from the States, became law on December 18th, 1865, when official proclamation was made that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime where of the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Lincoln did not live to see what posterity regards as the consummation of his most distinguished service to humanity. The pistol of a southern assassin ended his life, less than a month prior to the capture of Jefferson Davis.

Slavery within the English-speaking world ceased to have a legal existence. If our emancipation of the slaves was rightly termed one of the very few virtuous acts performed by any nation, the behaviour of the United States government towards the defeated slave-owning south is one of the very few instances of regrettable lenity. The planters were not indeed compensated as

<sup>1</sup> Thos. L. Johnson, *Twenty-eight Years a Slave*, 1909.

were the West Indians for the wrong they had done, but they were shamefully suffered within a few years to regain the power of which they had made so appalling a misuse. The progeny of the men whose labours redeemed the southern states from the wilderness and built up the cotton industry cannot indeed any longer be bought or sold, but by the descendants of the rebels, their taskmasters, they continue to be denied political rights and social recognition. Rarely can they count on justice in the southern courts. The spirit of the slaveholding south is so little changed that every effort is made, especially by the women, to keep alive the memory of the struggle and throw a false glamour of sentimentality over the most iniquitous cause for which men ever put hand to sword. Of the southern states as a nation, it may be remarked that they never produced a single man of eminence, politicians and soldiers excepted. Letters, the arts, and the sciences alike languished in the slave-owning world. A less ignorant people would not have shed their blood in a cause which was manifestly lost from the outset. Had the confederate arms extorted recognition from the north, the state thus constituted could not have survived the pressure of its mighty neighbour for more than a decade at the outside, even if it had been able to continue for so long relations with a world which regarded slavery with execration and its protagonists as outlaws.

As outlaws, whom, like Cain, any man might slay. Such was the inference which might have been drawn by the slave-holders themselves from the action of the British courts in the first year of the rebellion. The story dates back to 1853. At that time, there lived in the state of

Missouri, a black named John Anderson, the slave of one Moses Barton. He had a wife, the property of another planter with whom she lived two miles away. One day, Anderson was sold to a man named Macdonald, whose estate lay some thirty odd miles distant, and who proposed to sell him to a third party. Alarmed at the prospect of never seeing his wife again, the poor slave left his new owner and was found lurking in the vicinity of her plantation. Here he was accosted by a planter named Septimus Diggs and charged with being a fugitive slave. The wretched husband said he wanted to see one Charles Givens, to ask him to buy him, so that he might remain near his wife. To any but an American planter, the request would have appeared natural and commendable. Diggs, however, only saw in the black a runaway slave and told him to come with him, offering, however, to speak to Givens on his behalf. Anderson became suspicious of the white man's intentions; he ran off. Diggs called on some negroes who were working near by to pursue him, telling them that they should have the reward for his capture. Drawing a knife, the fugitive kept his pursuers at a distance. Closing on him in a circle, they drove him again into the neighbourhood of Diggs. Anderson warned him to keep off, and when Diggs struck at him with a stick, stabbed him in the breast. The white man turned to flee, but stumbled, and was again stabbed. He lingered some time but died of his wounds.

Anderson escaped to Canada where he lived unmolested till the spring of 1860, when he was recognised and his whereabouts reported to the Missouri police. An application was made for his apprehension and he was

remanded to gaol by a magistrate at Brantford, pending his extradition by order of the governor.

But in Canada, the refugees from slavery had many friends. An application for Anderson's release was made to the Court of Queen's Bench at Toronto. By a majority, the magistrate's order was confirmed. Mr. Justice McLean dissented on this ground, among others of a technical nature, that a man was justified in resisting an attempt to deprive him of his liberty. "In administering the laws of a British province," said the judge, "I never can feel bound to recognise as law any enactment which can convert into chattels a very large number of the human race."

It was a rude hour for the black man who had only sought to defend his rights as a human being. Luckily for him, the courts of England had not then renounced their ultimate jurisdiction over the dominions of the British crown. The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society took up the case and obtained from Lord Chief Justice Cockburn at Westminster a writ of habeas corpus directing the man Anderson to be brought before him. But before that writ could take effect, the Court of Common Pleas in Canada found that the evidence adduced against the prisoner pointed not to murder but to manslaughter, which was not one of the crimes specified in the extradition treaty. John Anderson by the decision of a British court went free.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, the result was pleasing to the power which had demanded extradition, the war against slavery having begun; while Canada, which was anti-slavery, was offended by the English court's assumption of jurisdiction—an assumption which was renounced in the same year.—*Annual Register*, 1861.

## CHAPTER NINE<sup>1</sup>

### THE UNION JACK AND THE SLAVE-TRADER

WHEN Britain, the great slave-trading power, retired from business in 1807, it was confidently predicted by many people who had given evidence before the parliamentary commissions, that the trade would at once be snatched up by other nations and carried on as vigorously as ever. As it happened, the times were not favourable for that development. All Europe was at war or on the brink of war, and on the other side of the Atlantic, the United States had formally declared the traffic in slaves from Africa illegal. Meanwhile, Britannia very effectively ruled the waves, and it was not safe for ships belonging to the few neutral maritime powers to be caught on the high seas doing anything which a British captain might think improper. By the end of the war, Sweden and the Netherlands had also legislated against the slave trade, and Napoleon, during his brief restoration, found time to prohibit it to Frenchmen. Wilberforce and Clarkson had talks with that benevolent despot, Alexander I, and Castlereagh persuaded the plenipotentiaries of eight powers assembled at Vienna, in 1815, to declare that "they could do no greater credit to their mission than by

<sup>1</sup> The material for this chapter has been extracted mostly from *Parliamentary Papers*, the *Annual Register*, Clowes' *History of the Royal Navy*, Du Bois' *The African Slave-Trade to the U.S.A.*, and Leonard's *Voyage to the West Coast of Africa*.

proclaiming their wish to put an end to a scourge which had so long desolated Africa, disgraced Europe, and afflicted humanity"; "the engagement," it was added, "contracted in this declaration could not be considered as completely fulfilled until complete success should have attended their efforts."

Unfortunately, the Congress left the precise nature of those efforts to be settled by treaty between the powers. How far the powers were sincere was soon seen. Englishmen had been drawn into the trade by the demand for negroes in Spanish America. That demand continued in the island of Cuba, which competed in the production of sugar with the British islands; it existed in Brazil; and the restored Bourbons for a time meditated re-conquering Haiti and replenishing its plantations. In 1808, a Yankee slaver named the *Amadie* had been captured by a British cruiser on the ground she was carrying slaves which had become unlawful by American law. Within nine months of the battle of Waterloo, H.M.'s ship *Queen Charlotte* encountered a French boat, the *Louis*, and finding she was carrying slaves, stopped her. The French resisted search, with a loss to the British of twelve men and to the slaver of three. No doubt, at that time, British naval commanders believed they had a right to search every vessel for slaves and confiscate the cargo. But their own courts ruled against them. Lord Stowell, Eldon's brother, observing that the slave trade was not piracy, declared that the right of search was given by treaty only, and that in its zeal for the liberation of Africa, Great Britain was not entitled to trample on the independence of other nations. In the same year (1817), Major Appleton was mulcted in heavy damages by an English jury for destroying the factory of

an American subject, Cooke, outside the limits of our settlement at Sierra Leone, on the suspicion, which appears to have been well founded, that it was used for receiving slaves or bartering them against commodities.

The idea that negroes could be held as property and that property, even a foreigner's, was more sacred than human life, persisted long in the lawyer's mind. There can be no doubt that Lord Stowell's decision protracted the lingering agony of the slave trade. Ships laden up to the gunwale with slaves might sweep under the bows of a British cruiser with impunity, so long as they flew the flag of a state which had not conceded the right of search. Thanks to a British judge, there now at last seemed no reason why other peoples should not take up the profitable trade which the English had so quixotically abandoned and supply the hungry markets of southern America. Opportunity, we are often told, makes the thief, and in this case, it certainly resulted in a singular demoralisation of national character. Long before Mansfield's decision, French lawyers had boasted that the touch of French soil made a slave free. Now, incited as well, it may be suspected, by a desire to flout the victorious Britons, Frenchmen rushed into the trade. Between the year 1815 and 1830—that is, be it noted, during the reign of the restored Bourbons—scores of ships sailed annually from the ports of France to pick up their living cargoes on the African coast and transport them to the Antilles or the American Mainland. This was not, however, a trade that could be carried on under the tricolour, and shortly after the revolution of 1830, Frenchmen were not only forbidden under severe penalties to handle slaves but a

treaty guaranteeing each power the right to search the other's vessels was concluded with England. Fifteen years later, that stipulation was waived upon France's maintaining a squadron of twenty-six sail in African waters, a force reduced in 1849 to twelve.

The Spaniards also had formerly been distinguished by an honourable reluctance to embark in the slave trade. Now, the restored king, like his Bourbon cousins of France, showed no disposition to give effect to the pious aspirations of Vienna. Only under strong pressure, and in consideration of a sum of £400,000 from England, did Spain in 1817 consent to relinquish the trade north of the equator. We had to wait till a wave of liberalism swept the country in 1835, when her prohibition was enforced by a treaty in virtue of which ships carrying her flag were liable to be condemned and broken up if they carried slave equipment.

For twenty years the traffic had been carried on under the French, American and Spanish flags. Upon the conclusion of this treaty the slavers hastened to take out Portuguese papers. This cost money. A Spanish captain on being told by a British officer that his papers were not genuine, burst out, "And I paid a blackguard at Porto Praya a thousand dollars for them!"<sup>1</sup> Most of the Spaniards Keppel found to be young men of good family who had embarked in the trade for the sake of excitement. The importation of slaves into Cuba was, of course, officially forbidden, but it went on for many years, winked at by successive governors.

Portugal had reserved the right to supply Brazil with slaves from her African colonies; although Brazil became an independent empire in 1826, the mother country was

<sup>1</sup> Keppel, *A Sailor's Life under Four Sovereigns*.



loath to give up a commerce which had become exceedingly profitable. Finding it impossible to negotiate a satisfactory treaty, Palmerston warned Lisbon that he did not propose to respect a flag which was prostituted to such base uses. In 1842, the little kingdom recognised our right of search, which our cruisers had exercised since 1839 by Palmerston's orders. Brazil had also given way, at a great cost to herself, for her vast uncultivated wildernesses seemed to cry aloud for labourers.

Thus the stars and stripes became from the year 1839 onwards the only flag under which the slaver, irrespective of his nationality, could find shelter. The sea-borne slave trade was, indeed, forbidden by the constitution of the United States, but the administration at Washington, dominated by southern slave-holders, put forth very little effort to suppress it. There was slight difficulty about importing negroes from Cuba; hundreds were landed in Texas before its annexation to the United States. In the south travellers came upon gangs of negroes who could not speak English. The few slave-traders who forced themselves on the notice of the Federal navy or Customs' officers were taken into southern ports, where they were subjected to purely nominal penalties by sympathetic judges, and generally pardoned by an indulgent president; their ships, meanwhile, having been bought back by friends and their human cargo having been mysteriously disposed of. An echo of the declaration of Vienna was heard in 1820 when Congress coupled the slaver's trade with piracy as punishable with death, and the President was directed to enforce the law by policing the African seas. Three or four cruisers were sent which paid only

five visits to the coast in four years. At a later period it was noticed that the degree of vigilance exhibited by their commanders depended very much on whether they came from the free or the slave-holding states. Commiserated with by an English traveller (Turnbull) on having inherited the institution of slavery from England, an American naval officer rejoined, "We look on it as a glorious inheritance."

The sudden rush to transfer from the Portuguese to the American flag damped whatever ardour the United States might have brought into the crusade. Seeing the high profits realised by the sale of Cuban negroes, Trist, the American consul at Habana, thought the trade offered temptation "which human nature as modified by American institutions could not withstand."<sup>1</sup> For issuing blank American clearance papers to slavers of all nationalities, Trist was recalled by Van Buren. Meanwhile, the administration at Washington was far from leaving others to do unhindered the work which they would not do themselves. The right to search American vessels was jealously withheld from all other powers. It was considered an outrage on the national dignity. In vain, England pointed out that all the scoundrels on the seas were flocking to take cover under the flag of the United States—even the right of "visit" by dropping a boat and asking the captain to show his papers, was not admitted and was subsequently denied. Pretending to assert the freedom of the seas, America was in practice permitting the abuse of her flag. With only four frigates, one of which spent less than one month out of fifteen months' service in slaving waters, she could not be said to be making efforts to prevent it. On being challenged by a

<sup>1</sup> Du Bois, *African Slave-Trade to the U.S.A.*

British officer, the *Illinois* of Massachusetts produced her American papers and was allowed to go unmolested; three days later, lest by some rare chance an United States cruiser should come along, she sailed with slaves under the Spanish flag; on meeting another British ship, she ran up the star-spangled banner, but fearing that she might be searched, in spite of the convention, her captain ran her aground, slaves and all. We hear of five kidnapped West Indian negroes being carried by this ship to Norfolk, Virginia. Not even by an United States cruiser could an American ship be seized if no slaves were actually aboard. Nine out of ten ships which, it was objected, were illegally detained by the British, were proved to be red-handed slavers.

While every difficulty was thus placed in their way by the bad faith or overt opposition of other nations and by the pettifogging lawyers at home, the sailors of Britain whole-heartedly set themselves to stamp out the traffic which had achieved its greatest development under their flag. By an older generation of naval officers, the slave trade had been defended as providing a nursery for our seamen. The business of suppressing it proved to be an excellent training for serious warfare and gave full scope for the qualities which have given Britain the mastery of the seas. The British sailor threw himself into the work of exterminating the slaver with the same reckless daring and tireless energy which his fathers had shown in attacking a Frenchman or a Spaniard. The crews themselves, observes an eye-witness of their bearing, betrayed no consciousness of the sublimity of their mission in liberating the African—they enjoyed the fight for the fighting's sake<sup>1</sup>; though many instances are recorded of a

<sup>1</sup> Leonard, *Voyage to West Coast of Africa*, 1834.

characteristic generosity on their part towards the miserable blacks whom they rescued. Something finer than mere pugnacity inspired the higher ranks; but in the portraits we discern on those finely whiskered countenances a supercilious smile, implying an unalterable conviction that one Englishman was indeed worth a hundred of any other people, and that resistance to the will of Britain was merely impudent rebellion. On June 6th, 1829, the schooner, *Pickle*, Commander McHardy, manned by thirty men and six boys, falls in with the big Spanish slaver, *Boladora*, with a crew of sixty, and mounting two long 18-pounders and two long 12's; after a close and severe action, the Spaniard is taken with a loss to the British of four killed and seven wounded, and to the enemy of ten killed and fourteen wounded. In the same year, on the West Indian station, Lieutenant Sherer, commanding the *Monkey*, seventy-five tons and twenty-six men, takes the Spanish schooner *Josefa*, carrying two hundred and seven slaves, and, after half an hour's action, the brig *Midas*, carrying four hundred. In September 1830, the *Primrose*, Commander Broughton, engages the *Veloz Pasajero*, Captain Barbozo, twenty guns, one hundred and eighty men, and takes her after a hand-to-hand conflict, the Spanish commander losing an arm and forty-six of his people. The British loss was three killed and thirteen wounded. Keppel (afterwards an admiral) met the Spanish captain some time later and thought him a fine fellow. Although the slave-dealers were described in England as the scum of the earth, they were not without their sportsmanlike virtues and displayed no rancour against the men engaged in ruining them.

Our sailors waxed lyrical over the beauty of the clippers, mostly American built, which they were matched against. It was the superior speed of their vessels that made the slavers' game profitable. In the modern phrase they could make rings round our ships. Immense, then, was our jubilation when we made prize of the *Black Joke* and turned her sailing powers against her late owners. Mounting a single long 18-pounder and carrying a crew of thirty-four, under the command of Lieutenant Downes, she soon accounted for twenty-one slavers, carrying altogether seven thousand slaves. Among these were the Spanish brig *Providencia* (fourteen guns); the Brazilian brig *Vengador* (eight guns); the Buenos Ayres privateer *Presidente* (seven guns and ninety-seven men) which with her two prizes carrying eight guns, was boarded and taken after a close running fight of ten hours; and the Spanish brig *Almirante* (fourteen guns and eighty crew), which struck after a chase of eleven hours and a hot action lasting eighty minutes, with a loss of fifteen killed and thirteen wounded and a British loss of three killed and seven wounded. Under Lieutenant William Ramsay, the *Black Joke* continued her victorious career. On April 25th, 1831, off the Calabar coast, she fought the *Marinerito* (five guns and seventy-seven men), one of the fastest vessels in those seas, boarded and took her with a loss of only one killed and seven wounded, although the Spaniard to get away, compelled the slaves themselves to take oars. Three Englishmen were found among the crew which was put ashore at Annobon. Nine of the slavers endeavoured to make their escape in canoes. Three of them were picked up, after having endured frightful hardships; the other six were never heard of again. Of

the rescued slaves, eighty-four perished on the passage to Sierra Leone, where the prizes were taken for adjudication; twenty of them went mad and jumped overboard. Among the blacks who had survived the double ordeal of capture and recapture, there was bitter lamentation when the good ship *Black Joke* was condemned as no longer seaworthy and doomed to the flames at Sierra Leone. The women crowded round the commander, imploring him to spare "poor Black Joke."

The slavers put faster vessels on the service and Palmerston sent out faster cruisers. But till 1835 the slavers could afford to laugh at the ten-gun brigs which we generally employed. Lord Belfast, a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, however, believed in that class of vessel and built one, the *Waterwitch*, which he boasted could outsail any ship in the Royal Navy. Bought by the Admiralty, "the fast and beautiful *Waterwitch*," as Keppel described her, soon gave a good account of herself on the West African station. Midshipman Bowles in her gig chased a slaver for a quarter of an hour, after losing two out of his crew of four. With a fowling piece, the young gentleman coolly picked off eight in succession of the enemy crew. These instances of our sailors' dare-devil spirit might be multiplied at the risk of wearying the reader.

Their contempt for the foreigners was by no means justified. The slavers always resisted capture and the desperadoes engaged in the trade fought well. The *Joaquina*, taken by the *Nimble* in West Indian waters, did not strike till she had lost her captain and was sinking. The *Dolphin*, Commander Riley, fired eighty-four shots at a brig and put upwards of fifty into her hull and canvas,

knocking away her gunwale and killing seven slaves, but till her mate was wounded in the arm she never shortened sail. In February 1845, the captured crew of the *Felicidade* murdered the English prize crew and recovered the ship. The *Felicidade* was taken again, some days later, by the *Star* but had to be abandoned owing to heavy weather. The new English prize crew took to a raft and lived on rain water and by eating some of the sharks that followed them. Five of them died, the remaining five being picked up.

On May 30th, 1841, off Whydah, the Brazilian brigantine *Firme* (170 tons), was cut out by the *Dolphin's* boats. Mate Murray in the gig with five men and Second-master Rees in the cutter with eight, pulled hard for two and a half hours, and after twenty minutes' firing boarded and took the Brazilian with a loss of two killed and three wounded. This action procured Murray, who was twice wounded, promotion. Placed in charge of the tiny schooner *Doris*, he gave proof of his seamanship in the course of a terrible voyage from Accra to Sierra Leone, with a crew of two men and two boys. The voyage, which usually took ten days, owing to bad weather, lasted 146. In an engagement off Lagos (May 26th, 1845), a slaver carrying four 12-pounders and a crew of fifty was taken by the boats of the *Pantaloön*, after a furious exchange of musketry and hand-to-hand fighting. Master Crout jumped through a gun-port beside the gun, which was fired at that moment, the blast blowing back a man who followed him, into the sea. In August 1844, a season which on the Guinea Coast does not predispose to exertion, Mate Tottenham in a four-oared gig with one hand to spare, chased and drove ashore a Brazilian brig of two hundred tons, carrying two 4-pounders and a crew of

eighteen. Attempting to board a felucca, manned by seventy "English, French and American scoundrels, with an English commander," Lieutenant Lodwick was severely wounded and had two of his men shot dead beside him. "He was promoted for gallantry"—a common entry in the history of the British West African Squadron.

Between the years 1810 and 1846, no fewer than 116,862 slaves were delivered by our ships. The number of slaving ships which to the knowledge of our consul cleared from Habana, fell in the year 1841 from fifty-nine to thirty-one and in the following year to *three*, and the number of slaves illicitly landed in Cuba from 25,000 to 3,140. Still better results, it was thought by Captain Denman, could be obtained by cruising close inshore and watching the points at which the traders could embark their cargo, rather than by cruising a long way off the land, a policy which Hotham, commanding the station, preferred in general. As our men received a bounty of five pounds for every slave rescued and half that sum for every slave who died before reaching the port of adjudication, Denman's proposal, as one might expect of a British officer, was sufficiently disinterested. Ashore, the business of the slave-dealer was now carried on under much greater difficulties than in Hugh Crow's day. The native chiefs were well aware that the dealers were criminals in the eyes of their own countrymen and took the fullest advantage of their disadvantage. In 1844, a strange vessel entered the Old Calabar river and offered its freight of rum to King Eyamba in exchange for slaves. The chief accepted the rum and directed the strangers to hide themselves in a secluded creek out of sight of the cruisers. After a long delay, the captain was told that the



vigilance of the British made it impossible to ship any slaves, therefore he had better take back the rum. The casks were rolled on board, and it was only when well out at sea that the unfortunate trader discovered they were now filled with water! The trade, Admiral Hotham reported to the Admiralty, was carried on by the assistance of the Americans and Sardinians. (The latter people, it is ironical to note, were just then appealing to the world to liberate Italians from the yoke of Austria.) "Their vessels brought the cargo required for the purchase of the slaves, with an additional master and a Brazilian crew; they had the necessary slave equipment; their papers were correct; and they remained off the port till the cruiser was led away when they shifted the flag and sailed under a Brazilian master."

At the mouth of the Gallinas river, was a nest of slave-dealers who exported some twelve thousand slaves annually to Habana. On November 21st, 1840, Denman found here and destroyed eight storehouses for goods used in the trade, employing sixty white men; he liberated nine hundred slaves, burned the barracoons or slave pens to the ground, and expelled the slave-factors. Commander Tucker destroyed the slaves' depots on the island of Corisco. Captain Matson pursued a similar course at Ambriz and Kabenda, two ports still in native possession near the mouth of the Congo. But the slaver knew that the English courts were tender of property. Merchants whose stores had been destroyed sued the officers, though unsuccessfully, pleading, of course, that nothing was further from their mind than the purchase of slaves. Dodson, the Queen's Advocate-general, told Lord Aberdeen that our seamen ought not to destroy

merchandise on shore. Afterwards, it appeared that he had not quite meant that (one is reminded of the numerous Acts of Parliament which turn out only after long years to have been totally misread); but, like Stowell, he had succeeded in temporarily paralysing the arm of our navy. The slave-dealers flocked back to Gallinas and rebuilt their barracoons. Four years later, Denman rescued two British subjects who had been branded with a mark which Mr. Angel Ximenez, one of the innocent merchants aforesaid, coolly acknowledged to be his.

At this distance of time, it appears pretty obvious that the British squadron had justified its upkeep and that its activities had appreciably lessened the sum of human wretchedness. That, strange to say, was not the opinion of the people who had clamoured loudest for the emancipation of the slave. Buxton, like Granville Sharp, hoped that the extinction of slavery could be brought about by the peaceful penetration of Africa and civilising the inhabitants. A model farm established on the Niger, in pursuance of this dream, proved a failure and so unhealthy that forty-eight out of 162 Europeans were buried there. Other critics of the Government's active naval policy were pacifists who thought it wrong to put down an evil thing by force. In the 'forties, the murmuring grew. You cannot stop slaves being carried over from Africa, protested the anti-coercionists, while the British squadron was actually doing it—the only real remedy is to close the markets, to stop slavery altogether. But slavery existed legally in the United States, in the Spanish colonies and in Brazil, and it would have required not only force, but a very great deal of force, to make those states give it up. For every slaver that is taken, two get away, was a

familiar and uncorroborated plea. The horrors of the Middle Passage are aggravated, it was said: to make his ventures worth while, the slave-trader must crowd his holds to a greater extent than ever. Wellington, in 1822, said the dread of detection suggested to the slaver expedients of concealment productive of increased suffering. There had been instances of slaves found hidden in casks. Before treaties were negotiated, permitting a slave ship to be condemned for possessing a slaver's equipment, she could be lawful prize only if slaves were found on board. On being chased by the *Fair Rosamond*, the captain of the Spanish brig *Rapido* threw all his slaves, manacled, overboard as he entered the Bonny river. Dead men tell no tales in a prize court. But two young negroes of athletic build, though handcuffed together, kept afloat till rescued by the crew of the *Fair Rosamond*, pointed after the retreating vessel, and when she was taken, gave evidence which resulted in her confiscation. Lord Clarence Paget said he chased a brig for seventeen hours, during the whole of which time the slaves were not allowed to move and were kept without food and water. The whole four hundred and eighty went mad. In citing such cases, the anti-coercionists forgot that if the mortality on each slaving trip was greater, which is disputable, the trip had to be done in a much shorter time and fewer trips were made.

The captain of the *John Begg*, a Liverpool trader, who had purchased five hundred slaves, finding himself closely blockaded by our cruisers, kept the blacks so closely penned up that two hundred of them died. The remainder he sold to another trader. But, on another and later occasion, when a trader found himself unable to

embark his slaves, he allowed them to purchase their freedom by gathering ground nuts. Eighteen months later, they had erected a village on the spot and were doing a good trade in nuts. The thousands of rescued slaves put ashore at Sierra Leone speedily acquired a veneer of civilization and were commended for their devout observation of the Sabbath. They should have helped forward that civilizing work which the pacifists had so much at heart. Others on being offered the free choice elected to go to the West Indies and work for wages.

Gladstone, possibly because he was the descendant of slave-owners, John Bright, because he believed in trade and hated soldiering, Cobden, probably for the same reasons, and others who we hope had afterwards the grace to be ashamed of themselves, openly in the House of Commons advocated the calling-off of the British squadron. A peer of the realm maintained that a whole tribe of Africans was not worth the life of a single British seaman. Most active in this extraordinary campaign was the member of Parliament for Gateshead, named William Hutt, in response to whose demands the government appointed a commission to examine into the state of the slave trade and the utility of the British squadron. Sympathy with the black man having by this time been almost exhausted in England, an appeal to the heart of the people was made by stressing the misery and danger of service on the African coast. Here, certainly, there was not much room for exaggeration. The station was reputed to be the unhealthiest after China. Was not Sierra Leone called the White Man's Grave? Three years was the maximum term of service, but not every man

could endure it so long. The station was extremely unpopular among the officers, though Captain Edmonstone said the men were glad of the opportunity of earning prize money. Only at St. Helena was shore leave possible. The loneliness was seldom relieved by the delivery of letters; there were, of course, no occasions of social relaxation, no women's society anywhere. Speaking at a later date, Commander Eardley Wilmot dwelt on the terrible monotony of the African coast-line which, combined with the incessant rolling and the rumble of the surf, had brought about many cases of mental breakdown. Fresh meat and vegetables could rarely be got. Complaining not of the hardships of the service but of the difficulties under which it was prosecuted, Keppel says, "During the Harmattan wind, one's view is confined to within a cable's length of the ship. Vessels near the land get so completely covered with dust that it takes several days to wash with fresh water. The slavers during the Harmattan generally escape."

The committee issued its report in 1849. Its members were not in agreement, but Hutt derived enough encouragement from the conclusions to move in the House of Commons that the squadron should be withdrawn. He expected to succeed, but Lord John Russell and Palmerston marched the supporters of the government in to the Noes lobby and the motion was defeated by seventy-eight votes. *The Times*, which throughout the American Civil War was on the side of the slavers, was very wroth with the ministers, but their attitude was expressive of the conscience of the nation. Hutt returned to the charge in 1858; but by then the British squadron had very nearly accomplished its task.

In 1851, Palmerston in the House of Commons made a long statement in regard to the trade. "On the coast of Africa, the slave trade may almost be said to have been extinguished north of the line, for the moment at all events, with the exception of two ports, Whydah and Porto Novo. The propensity survives only among the chiefs . . . the people are learning to extend the legitimate traffic in the products of the country." His lordship, probably with his tongue in his cheek, referred to the hearty co-operation of the Portuguese, French and American officers. The chief market was Brazil, but in consequence of earnest representations that empire had now made the trade piracy. In 1850, thanks to its co-operation, the trade was not one half what it had been. In Brazil and in Cuba, there was a powerful anti-slavery party. Several Brazilian cruisers had co-operated with us on the coasts in destroying barracoons and releasing slaves and every slave-dealer had been banished. A member of the Fonseca family had lost no fewer than eighty-one vessels, of the estimated value of £200,000 in all. Capital to the amount of £1,100,000, previously invested in the slave trade, had lately been withdrawn and invested in a Lisbon bank.

If Brazil had fallen into line with the European powers and the Spanish-American republics, it was because Palmerston had resorted, according to his wont, as much to demonstrations as to representations. The slaver which had eluded our cruisers or sailed gaily past them with the stars and stripes at her masthead was now pursued into Brazilian waters. In 1845, when a British ship carrying rescued slaves was driven ashore by stress of weather on to the Brazilian coast, a party of men, dis-

guised as soldiers, persuaded the negroes to go with them; they were never recovered. Another British commander finding himself in the like circumstances, three years later, repelled a similar attempt at kidnapping by force. In June 1850, Captain Schomberg, commanding the *Cormorant*, captured and burnt a Brazilian slaver off Cape Frio. Going up the river Paranagua, he found four slavers at anchor. He secured three of them, towed them out under the fire of the Brazilian fort which he returned, burnt two and sent the third to St. Helena. The patriotism of Brazilians, especially of Brazilian slave-dealers, was aroused by these high-handed proceedings. "Do you suppose," said a minister in the Brazilian chamber, "that a power like Great Britain having determined to suppress the slave trade will desist till her task is accomplished?" But the trade being mostly in the hands of Portuguese capitalists, the imperial authorities were able to lend themselves more gracefully to the work of co-operation with the British.

This was a bad blow to the Yankee traders. In the 'forties, many ships from New England ports—the *Enterprise*, the *Kentucky*, the *Porpoise*, among others—landed slaves in Brazil. In 1847, two separate cargoes of 700 and 944 were delivered from two American ships; in 1853, the *Congo* brought 500. But now the strong long arm of Palmerston was felt. In 1856, the *Mary E. Smith*, which had sailed from Boston in spite of efforts to detain her, was captured carrying slaves, by the Brazilian brig, *Olinda*, off the port of São Matheos. Finding that South America was closed to their enterprise, the Americans turned their attention to supplying the home market. New York, declared

*The Times*, is now the greatest slave port of the world. In 1858, the *Wanderer* deposited 500 negroes in Georgia—they disappeared. Stephen A. Douglas said that 15,000 slaves were brought into the states in the year 1859.

Our ships were on the look-out for them. In 1850, the slaver *Venus* and two other slavers, having been furnished with American papers by the obliging consul Trist, cleared from Habana. Captain Hamilton who had been lying outside in H.M.S. *Vestal* at once gave chase, cheered, it is strange to record, by the crews of an American warship. The *Venus* was boarded and taken; and seeing that her consorts were likely to escape in the intricate and unfamiliar channels of the Bahamas, Hamilton held a pistol to the head of her captain and compelled him to act as steersman, with the result that the other slavers were caught.

So many ships conveying slaves under the cover of the American flag were taken by the British in the Gulf of Mexico that the administration at Washington was moved by the slave-holding interest to renew its protests to London. Probably, our officers in those days were apt to be high-handed. It was alleged they had an unpleasant way of pulling in boats round American ships while they were loading and unloading. Captain Cline, however, of the Merchants' Exchange in New York, is reported to have said that he had conversed with many officers and crews from Cuba and that not one of them considered himself damaged to the extent of one cent. In the course of a debate in the Commons, Lord Palmerston said our gunboats had been sent to Cuba at the request of the United States government itself, and that



the outcry was raised by those whose nefarious proceedings were brought under supervision. But Palmerston unfortunately was no longer in office, and the conservative cabinet gave way. Lord Malmesbury pointed out to the Federal authorities that if it were known that the American flag covered every iniquity, every pirate and slaver on the seas would carry it and no other; notwithstanding, our commanders were warned that even in the most suspicious cases they could only board a ship flying those colours at their personal risk.

Being now put on their mettle, the United States cruisers became more active. The commanders, to do them justice, were no more inclined than ours to let a slaver escape on some pedantic legal quibble, though the lawyers would always release their prey if they could. The captures of the *Echo* with 306 slaves and the *Erie* with 897, and of the *William* with 550, must be credited to the United States navy during the two years preceding the outbreak of the rebellion.

The *William* was taken off the coast of Cuba. That island continued to offer a ready market for black flesh, in spite of the solemn engagements of successive Spanish governments. The feeble and corrupt administration of Queen Isabel II had brought the law into contempt. Times were changed since a quiet-looking magistrate bearing the king's warrant could command the obedience in the remotest parts of America of fiery adventurers and the haughtiest viceroys. The law forbidding the importation of slaves was cleverly circumvented by the planters always declaring a much higher number of slaves than they actually possessed, so as to account for fresh batches illicitly introduced. Governors and officials

waxed fat on the bribes they received for what it would be an euphemism to call connivance. Cristina the queen-mother, and her husband, the astute Duke of Riansares, were commonly believed to dabble in the traffic. Under cover of the reefs abounding on the Cuban coast, small steamers went out to meet the slavers and took off their cargo at secret rendezvous. A regular blockade, said a British officer, was impracticable, owing to the volume of traffic. The Spaniards themselves maintained a fairly large naval force on the station, mainly to suppress attempts at insurrection, but the captains put little energy into the pursuit of slavers, as they knew they would never get their prize money. A ship of doubtful nationality called the *Cicéron* was especially notorious in the traffic and was the subject of many notes addressed by the British government to Paris, Madrid and Habana. Two merchants, Gutierrez and Casal, imported 920 negroes from the Congo on June 1st, 1860, at a place named Cayo Verde. The noise made in the process of disembarking them aroused the crew of a Spanish warship nearby, and 500 were retrieved. Of these, sad to say, twenty-eight were sold by the sailors themselves, the rest being taken to the depot of *emancipados* at Habana, where according to law, they were hired out by the authorities at wages, and were supposed to recover their freedom at the end of a specified term. (It must be remembered that the question how to dispose of rescued slaves was not easy to resolve—frequently, they had been brought from places in the unknown interior of Africa, and to land them simply on the African coast would generally amount to exposing them to be sold once more into slavery or to massacre.) But Gutierrez and Casal had the audacity

to claim them on the ground that they had not been imported from Africa, but had been seized while being conveyed from one part of the island to another. Though Serrano, the captain-general, threatened to expel the dealers from the island, they bribed the judges and got the whole consignment back. This successful suit encouraged other parties to claim the restitution of 1,100 negroes disembarked from the *Cicéron*, and intercepted as they were being marched along the coast. By this time, Serrano had been succeeded by a viceroy, General Dulce, whose methods strikingly belied his name. To the incredulous astonishment of the slave-dealers, he announced that he was going to enforce the law without fear or favour; and despite the extensive campaign of calumny presently instituted against him, he seems to have been as good as his word. Summoning the leading slave-owners before him, he told them to leave the island within three days, under pain of imprisonment. Don Juan de Zulieta, the millionaire slave-dealer, was only suffered to remain by the intercession of the court of Madrid. That Dulce would have been continued in office long enough to deal the trade a death-blow is doubtful. But Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State, had now concluded a treaty with Britain, conceding the right of search and directed to securing the final extirpation of slavery. United States cruisers now co-operated zealously with ours, capturing as many as 4,200 slaves at the mouth of the Congo. On February 7th, 1862, a slaver, Nathaniel Gordon, was hanged by order of the United States Court of New York—the first and only person who suffered the extreme penalty decreed by the law for that offence. For a while, after

the conclusion of this treaty, slavers approaching Cuba flew the French or Dutch flag. British consuls announced that Cadiz was becoming the centre of the trade. It was the last expiring flicker of the transatlantic traffic. Lagos and Porto Novo, the great slave ports of Guinea, had been taken by England; the series of annexations, condemned by a curious school of humanitarians, which secured life and liberty to the black man under the Union Jack, had begun. Commander Eardley Wilmot, commanding the West African station, wrote: "The year 1864 may well be recorded in the annals of slave trading as one of complete success over the well-contrived plans of the slave-dealers." Palmerston, before his death in October 1865, could congratulate himself on having done more than any statesman, since the year 1807, to bring about that result.

That so much capital should be embarked in this nefarious traffic, that it should persist in spite of the risks it involved, attested the dire need for labourers in those lands which the sweat of the negro had fertilized. That need was felt as sorely in the colonies of other powers as in Britain's, in the Indian Ocean as well as on the other side of the Atlantic. In the French dependency of Reunion, as in the sister island of Mauritius, the slaves had first been replaced by coolies, drawn from the French stations in India. When this limited source of supply approached exhaustion, the planters turned longing eyes on the not far distant shore of Africa, behind which lay vast reserves of man power hitherto almost untapped. Napoleon III who ruled over France gave ear to the pressing needs of his remotest subjects. All his life he had tacked on a zigzag course between the ideals of

liberty which he had imbibed in his youth, and an urge to manage people, whether they liked it or not, for their own benefit as he conceived it. He approved a plan to supply the West Indian and African islands with labour by importing negroes as voluntary indentured labourers, to serve five years, at the end of which time they were entitled to be transported free to their homes. They were to be paid (in Reunion) from six to eight shillings a month, in addition to their board and lodging and clothing. No corporal punishment was to be inflicted on them, and the voluntary nature of their contract and its precise terms were to be clearly explained to them by an interpreter at the time of their engagement.

The sovereignty of the eastern coast was vested from Delagoa Bay to the Rovuma in the crown of Portugal; farther north, in the Arab sultan of Zanzibar. Only under pressure from the French admiral was the Sultan, so he alleged, compelled to admit the recruiting agents to his ports. No coercion was needed in the case of the Portuguese administrators who promptly put the agents in touch with the slave-raiders of the interior. A large batch of negroes destined for the Cuban market was disposed of to the French, and when the slaver captains sailing under the Spanish and American flags offered higher prices, they were driven off by their new competitors fiercely threatening to burn their vessels.

As likely to extinguish the old slave trade and as offering a chance of bettering himself to the negro, this and similar schemes of recruiting native labour might at first sight have been supposed to command the approbation of the black man's friends. The immigrants, it is not denied, were kindly treated by the French and very

few of them ever availed themselves of the right to be sent home. But when the activities of the French emigration agents became known in England, they roused a storm of indignation. It was asked publicly whether the great Emperor of the French was endeavouring to revive the slave trade. This indignation was not ill-founded. However well treated the natives might be on reaching their destination, the demand for them was met in exactly the same way as the demand for slaves. As a West Coast chief remarked, "This trade all the same old slave trade bin." Villages were raided, tribes made war on each other, simply to get the premiums offered by the labour contractors on the coast. That the blacks themselves did not always appreciate the kind intentions of the white man nor distinguish between him and the raiders who had dragged them from their villages was soon tragically shown. A consignment of Africans being carried to Reunion turned on the crew, massacred them, and put the captain's son, a mere lad, to death with horrible cruelty. In 1857, on the west coast, occurred the better known case of the inaptly named *Regina coeli*. In the absence of the captain, the natives murdered the Europeans with the exception of the medical officer and tried to steer the ship back to the land. The captain pursued in an open boat. Presently, the *Regina coeli* was overhauled by the *Ethiope*, a British merchantman, and taken to a Liberian port where the negroes were set at liberty, after having been allowed to rifle the cargo. The episode created an enormous stir in England, where the French emperor was far from popular at the moment. His ears were not deafened by the somewhat hysterical clamour of his assailants to the substantial arguments against his

system. Unless the negroes' engagements were absolutely voluntary, he wrote he must withdraw his sanction; and his free-thinking cousin, Prince Napoleon, gave effect his wishes by forbidding the traffic altogether in 1859, to the dismay of the people at Marseilles and Barcelona who had invested huge sums in building big ships in order to take part in it.

## CHAPTER TEN

### THE SUPPRESSION OF SLAVERY IN EAST AFRICA

THE trade in slaves persisted on the east coast of Africa at least a quarter of a century after its disappearance from the Atlantic. An instance is recorded of an English slaver penetrating so far in the eighteenth century, to evade the monopoly of the Royal African Company, but because of its enormous distance from the markets in America, the Indian Ocean was seldom visited by the European man-catchers. What traffic there was, was for the most part controlled by the Portuguese. Not till the introduction of steam and till the British had scared them from the west coast did the *Venus* and other slavers, well known in the Caribbean, find their way round to Mozambique and Inhambane, even as far north as Lamu. In July 1857, while Lyons McLeod on board the British ship *Zambesi* lay in British waters off Port Natal, a Cuban-owned vessel, the *Minnetonka*, flying the American flag, appeared in the offing and made enquiry through the pilot if any slaves were to be had.

When the French entered the trade, the Americans and Cubans stayed away; and when the French government gave up the project of recruiting free African labourers and fell back once again on India for supplies, a further effort was made by French and Spanish firms to revive the traffic in slaves, unmolested, they hoped, by the pestilent British. These firms spared no expense;



they fitted out splendid vessels; but the news of these strange doings in the Indian Ocean attracted British warships to the scene, and in the year 1860-61, out of six ships which had cleared from Marseilles five were lost or captured, thanks to information supplied by an Arab dealer to our consular agent at Zanzibar.

Till the middle of the nineteenth century, the fight for the suppression of the sea-borne traffic in slaves had been waged against men of European origin sailing under one or other of the flags of christendom. Now, upon their entrance into East African waters, the British found themselves faced with a commerce which had been going on for countless ages between those coasts and the countries of western Asia, conducted by the Arabs—probably, the first race to buy and sell their fellow men. This trade differed in all but its essential iniquity from that which had been carried on by the white men in the Atlantic. The Arabs were not only slave merchants but missionaries. Nearly all, if not all the negroes seized by them, were converted to Islam. Mohammedan slavery was in its conditions mild. The natives captured by the Moslems were not worked to death on sugar or cotton plantations to enrich a master who regarded them as lower than the beasts; they became part of their owner's household or at worst were assigned the status of the serf in medieval European society.

In Queen Victoria's reign, however, Englishmen were not disposed to tolerate slavery in any shape or form. As far back as 1845, we concluded a treaty with the Imam of Muscat, who at that time ruled over the coast from Cape Delgado to near the equator, whereby the export of slaves to Muscat or beyond became illegal. The local

or domestic trade between Zanzibar and the mainland was not to be interfered with, although unlawful between January 1st and May 1st. As the Imam and his successor, the Sultan of Zanzibar, received a duty of four dollars on every slave sold in that market, they probably had not the will, as they certainly had not the power, to enforce this agreement. The burden of policing the East African coast, of course, fell on British shoulders. The force we maintained in those waters was never considerable. A consul complained that we sent only two ships to patrol the Mozambique channel, a length of coast equal to that from Lands End to the Shetland Isles. But a warship to be of any use in this service had to be equipped with a mosquito fleet of steam pinnaces and smaller craft, capable of penetrating to creeks and shoal waters which were inaccessible to larger vessels. On an average, the cost of maintaining our East African squadron amounted to £200,000 a year, to which must be added the heavy toll levied on our seamen's lives and health. In return for this expenditure and exertion, Captain Colomb asserted that not more than 6.6 per cent. of the slaves exported from the coast were rescued by our cruisers.

Arabs traders were mostly subjects of the Sultan of Zanzibar or his cousin, the Imam of Muscat. They brought down their captives to Kilwa on the coast, whence they took them over for the most part to Zanzibar, to await a favourable moment for transshipping them to their ultimate destinations. Between 1862-67, 97,203 slaves were exported from Kilwa. Where they all went is still a mystery. A great depot existed at Sûr on the south-eastern coast of Arabia, close to Ras al Hadd, the rendezvous of the slaving fleet. Thence, Colomb

believed, a great many were taken across the desert to Riyadh, the seat of the Wahabi power in the heart of the peninsula. Others went up the Red Sea; some to the Persian Gulf; and from Mohammerah, numbers of girls drifted finally into the harems of Turkey. Up-country in Africa, the price of a negro boy was two yards of calico, worth in English money about tenpence; at Kilwa, his value had increased to 4s. 2d.; at Zanzibar, to £1 6s. 6d., or seven dollars. In Oman the prices ranged from ten to forty dollars, girls fetching the highest price. The trade, it will have been seen, was eminently profitable. "With ten baskets full of dates," said an Arab sheikh, "which a man may obtain on credit, he can get twenty slaves at Zanzibar worth a thousand dollars."

Most people are familiar with the appearance of the dhows, the vessels in which the slaves were shipped. They are deckless with a single sail and bows almost rising out of the water. Most of them did not exceed eighty tons burthen. Their sailing power astonished and frequently baffled our sailors of the early seventies. On board, everybody was stowed like cattle, slaves and masters alike, without the least regard to condition or comfort. The only food provided was uncooked rice. Water, which masters and slaves drank sparingly, was easily got, since the dhows seldom ventured out of sight of land. From Zanzibar to Ras al Hadd, the voyage with a favouring wind took from seventeen to eighteen days; from Lamu, at the northern end of the Sultan's coast line, where the cargo was often accumulated, the trip took only eight or nine days. Having got his captives on board, the Arab was inclined as in all matters to leave the rest to Allah. More than once, dhows which had

been blown out of their course, were picked up by our seamen, the ship's company perishing or already perished for want of food. A starving slaver was on one occasion supplied by the kind-hearted captain of a passing P. & O. liner. The slaves were never bound and no precautions were taken against a mutiny. They were treated better by the Arabs, says an Englishman, than by the French or Portuguese. But there is another side to the picture. To lighten his craft and escape capture, the slaver never hesitated to knock his slaves on the head or to throw them overboard. To stem the progress of the disease which constantly decimated these closely packed masses of humanity, the same rough and ready methods were at once resorted to; and captured dhows had frequently to be burnt by our men as likely to infect any one within miles or to suffocate by their stench.

Service on the East African coast was for our sailors hardly less disagreeable and was much less exciting than on the West coast. Our commanders were hampered during the continuance of the treaty with Zanzibar by the clause legalizing the existence of domestic slavery and the transport of domestic slaves from one port of the sultanate to another. Slaves were taken from Zanzibar in large numbers to Lamu, to be smuggled over to Arabia as the opportunity occurred. Of course, no such resistance as was often offered by the European slave captains was ever to be expected from the Arabs. Our navy's record on this coast does not abound in thrilling episodes. In 1869, we read, between January 4th and April 9th, the *Nymphe*, four guns crew, took sixteen slave dhows. On April 11th, another was taken by this ship's cutters with a loss to us of one man killed and two

officers wounded. In 1872, the twin-screw *Vulture*, three guns, off Ras al Hadd, took a dhow with 169 slaves aboard; thirty-six of these had the smallpox and forty-four sufferers had already been thrown overboard. In March 1874, Commander Foot in the *Daphne* took a large dhow of 200 tons, off Madagascar, with 230 slaves and forty other people. She had been eighteen days at sea and had lost thirty slaves. Owing to the refusal of the steamship company's agent at Mozambique to take charge of the rescued blacks, Foot had to take them on to Zanzibar. He encountered a cyclone and forty more perished. As recently as May 1887, a desperate fight took place off the Isle of Pemba between a party of twelve well-armed Arabs and the pinnacle of the *Turquoise*. Lieutenant Fegen and four others of our men were wounded, one mortally, but the dhow was followed and eventually broached to and capsized with an enemy loss of eleven. Some fifty slaves were taken out of her and taken to Zanzibar. On October 17th, 1888, Lieutenant Cooper was killed, capturing a slaver. In 1893, sixty-seven slaves, sixty of whom were children, were discovered by our cruiser *Philomel* aboard a ship flying the French flag; the captain and crew were acquitted and released by a French court at Reunion, to which they had been referred by their consul at Zanzibar.

"I have always thought," said Captain Colomb, "that the worst thing that can happen to a slave is to be captured by one of Her Majesty's cruisers. He spends a happy time on board the ship; but his after career is a doubtful one." The rescued people were landed at Aden or the Seychelles, and sent on to Bombay, where some kind of education was provided for the little ones. As

many as could be absorbed were drafted as indentured labourers to Mauritius—a practice which exposed the British to the charge of seizing the Arabs' slaves for their own profit. Many slaves disappeared at Aden and were almost certainly re-enslaved. It was no more practicable than on the other side of the Continent to send them back to their homes.

In the majority of cases, the more intelligent captives would have agreed with Colomb. Once converted to Islam, the slave looked back on his previous existence with shame and abhorrence and thanked God for having delivered him from the bondage of idolatry. "I was a pagan and a man-eater, too," said a Moslem's bondman to Sir Harry Johnston, "I knew no better, and was a brute, and no one had told me of Allah and his Nabi (prophet)." Savages converted to the religion of the cross were equally grateful. There is no colour bar in the Mohammedan world. Negro slaves often rise to positions of trust and eminence. They have founded sovereign dynasties in southern India. If the women bore sons to their masters, the sons were acknowledged, and the mothers manumitted or at least treated with special consideration. At Zanzibar itself, slaves worked only five days in the week for their master, and with their earnings they purchased—other slaves! To many observers, the ownerless black appeared as miserable as the stray dog.

Moslems were fond of comparing the lot of their slaves with that of those who worked for Christians, but, though the African may have been happier as a slave than free, the process of enslaving him was distinctly painful and abundantly justified the interference of the

British on land and sea. "The slave dealer goes into the country with so many muskets and so many pieces of calico, and he finds out the most powerful chief, and gives him spirits and keeps him in a state of semi-drunkenness the whole time, and tells him he must have some more slaves; he gives him muskets and powder on account, and the man instantly finds out an opportunity to settle some old outstanding quarrel with some other chief and therefore a war breaks out. As soon as a war breaks out, favourable conditions are created for carrying on the slave trade, because famine is sure to follow in a country where people are dependent on one wet season for tilling the ground, for it is only during a wet season that corn can be sown. Then a chief without food and without means of buying food will sell off his people very cheaply indeed. Captures are made in war; kidnapping is prevalent all over the country; which leads again to all sorts of petty disputes and retaliation; and the more disturbed the country is, the cheaper slaves become, so cheap that I have known children" (said the Rev. Horace Waller) "of the ages from eight to ten years bought for less corn than would go into one of our hats. It pays the slave-dealer to collect as many as he can, knowing that he must lose a certain proportion on the way but also knowing that the remnant he saves will pay him a very large profit. It is like sending up to London for a large block of ice in the hot weather—you know that a certain amount will melt away before it reaches you in the country, but what remains will be quite sufficient for your wants."

The same authority, a friend of Livingstone, bore witness to the frightful depopulation of the whole coun-

try between Lake Nyasa and the coast, due to the operations of the slave-catchers. His evidence, though corroborated by other witnesses, failed to satisfy Captain Colomb as to the guilt of the Arabs. The native tribes, he points out, were always ready to fly at each other's throat without prompting from outsiders. The devastation of the country he attributed to the warlike Mazitu who threatened even the town of Kilwa. They killed many of the Arabs. North of the Zambesi, before the Arabs were known there, the Portuguese did a brisk trade supplying women and children from the Shire highlands to the Kaffirs, to make good their losses in constant intertribal warfare. Colomb questioned seven of the slaves whom he rescued how they came to fall into the hands of the traders. Three were prisoners of war, sold to the Arabs; one, a youth, had been sold by his father; a fifth had been stolen by the Arabs while he slept, and of the two others, girls, one had also been stolen on the road and the other sold to them, when her father had been slain in a fight and her house burned over her head. Clearly, the Arab from the coast was always at hand, ready to play the jackal, and the knowledge that he could find a ready market for his captives could not have made the chiefs less bellicose; and family affection, said to be deficient among the Africans, was not promoted by providing parents with purchasers for their spare children. When ivory, and not human flesh, was the object of the Arabs' quest, no doubt they preferred peaceful conditions for their trading. When forbidden by the Casembe to enter his country, Livingstone tells us, "they did not attempt to force their way, but after sending friendly message and presents to different chiefs,



when these were not cordially received, turned homewards. From first to last they were extremely kind to me, and showed all due respect to the Sultan's letter. I am glad I was witness of their mode of trading in ivory and slaves. It formed a complete contrast to the atrocious dealings of the Kilwa traders, who are supposed to be, but are not, the subjects of the same sultan. If one wished to depict the slave trade in its most attractive or rather least objectionable form, he would accompany these gentlemen subjects of the Sultan of Zanzibar. If he would describe the land traffic in its most disgusting phrases, he would follow the Kilwa traders along the road to Nyasa, or the Portuguese half-castes from Tette to the River Shire."

For every slave brought down to the coast, the great explorer estimated that ten perished in the interior. The trader proceeded very slowly, picking up slaves here and there, so that his journey might consume three months. Forty thousand slaves passed a single station in one year. The mortality was appalling, but the country was unhealthy and the natives subject to dreadful diseases. The male slaves were sometimes yoked together by slave sticks, each of the forked ends gripping a man by the neck. Generally, however, the Africans did not find the toil of travel insupportable. Livingstone thus describes the march of a caravan: "The long line of slaves and carriers, brought up by their Arab employers, adds life to the scene: they are in three bodies, and number 450 in all. Each party has a guide with a flag, and when that is planted, all that company stops till it is lifted, and a drum is beaten and a kudu's horn is sounded. One party is headed by about a dozen leaders, dressed with

fantastic headgear of feathers and beads, and skins cut into strips and twisted: they take place in line, the drum beats, the horn sounds harshly, and all fall in. These sounds seem to awaken a sort of *esprit de corps* in those who have once been slaves. My attendants now jumped up and all day they were among the foremost. One said to me that his feet were rotten with marching, and this though told they were not called to race along like slaves. The Africans cannot stand sneers. When any mishap occurs in the march (as when a branch tilts a load off a man's shoulder) all who see it set up a yell of derision; if anything is accidentally spilled, or if one is tired and sits down, the same yell greets him and all are excited thereby to exert themselves. They hasten on with their loads, and hurry with the sheds they build, the masters only bringing up the rear and helping anyone who may be sick. The distances travelled were quite as much as the masters or we could bear. Had frequent halts been made, but little distress would have been felt; but five hours at a stretch is more than men can bear in a hot climate. The female slaves held on bravely; nearly all carried loads on their heads, the head—or lady of the party, who is also the wife of the Arab, was the only exception. These ladies had a jaunty walk and never gave in on the longest march; many pounds weight of fine copper leglets above the ankles seemed only to help the sway of their walk; as soon as they arrive at the sleeping-place they begin to cook, and in this art they show a good deal of expertness, making savoury dishes for their masters out of wild fruits and other not very likely materials." The prettier girls often persuaded their masters to free them. Livingstone came across a party

of eighty-five slaves enclosed in a pen formed of durasticks. "The majority were boys of about eight or ten years of age; others were grown men and women. Nearly all were in the taming stick; a few of the younger ones were in thongs, the thong passing round the neck of each. Several pots were on the fires, cooking dura and beans." The half-caste Arabs in charge of them said that after feeding them and accounting for the losses on the way to the coast, they made little by the trip.

Discipline was not always strict. In many of the villages the people stood to their arms as the slave gang passed. When the slaves were out of sight of their masters, they carried things with a high hand, demanding food and stealing tobacco, as if they had power and authority. A considerable proportion of the losses *en route* were due not to death but to the slaves running away.

But when there was no European to watch, the Arabs hesitated not to despatch those they could not drag further. If they released a slave who pleaded sickness, they said, this would encourage malingering. The rule, therefore, was: march or die. Swann at a later period, observed a woman who carried a child on her back and a load of ivory on her head. What would be done, he enquired, if the double burden proved too much for her. "We spear the child," was the answer.

The sight of a chieftain's wife in the chain-gang shocked the ladies of Lunda. They brought her food and one man offered to redeem her with three slaves; but she had been sold as a punishment for adultery and the Casembe, the ruler of the country, would not permit her to be released. "There is a very large propor-

tion of very old and very tall men in the district," adds Livingstone. "The slave-trader is a means of punishing the wives which these old fogies ought never to have had." Elsewhere, the explorer writes: "A poor old woman and child are among the captives; the boy of three years old seems a mother's pet. His feet are sore from walking in the sun. He was offered for two fathoms and his mother for one fathom; he understood it all, and cried bitterly, clinging to his mother. She had, of course, no power to help him; they were separated at Karungu afterwards." But on the Zambesi, the slave's lot was not so hopeless as on the Mississippi. If he wished to change his master, he sought out one whom he liked better and by breaking a spear or bow in his presence, transferred himself irrevocably.

But slavery, Livingstone pronounced to be an evil thing, and Englishmen were minded to make an end of it, the more easily perhaps since he had himself shown the way into the heart of the darkest continent. In their reports, consuls and naval officers made it plain that the traffic in slaves could not be stopped, so long as they could be publicly sold at Zanzibar and dhows flit freely with their human freight between the island and the mainland. Mass meetings were held in London. It was the day of Exeter Hall when the public conscience was more articulate than now. Britain had a right to intervene, it was alleged, since the Zanzibar trade was financed by Banyans, Indians from the protected state of Kutch. In 1873, Sir Bartle Frere was sent to discuss the matter with Sultan Barghash. Some sympathy must be extended to a prince called upon by an infidel power to stamp out a traffic which his subjects held to be legitimate and in

accordance with their religious beliefs. To protect their interests, the harassed sultan made an offer of his dominions to the French; but while the British envoy took a sharper tone, British warships gathered round the island capital. The French were not in time. Under a threat of bombardment and upon the advice of Sir John Kirk, the British consul, Sultan Barghash signed a treaty with Britain under which, in the year 1874, the slave trade became unlawful within his realms, by land and by sea.

The Arab dealers beheld themselves deprived of their most convenient market and of an outlet to the sea. It was a long way to the Gulf of Aden, through the country of the fierce Somali; longer still, through the lands weakly held by the Egyptians, to the ports of the Red Sea. The white men were spying out the land, penetrating into the heart of the continent. Livingstone was found at Ujiji by Stanley in 1870 and died in 1873. Cameron crossed Africa from Zanzibar to Benguela. Stanley circumnavigated the Victoria Nyanza and in 1875 went down the mighty Congo from Nyangwe to the Atlantic. These explorations which were ultimately to bring about their downfall, seem for a moment to have given a fillip to the activities of the Arabs. They followed the intrepid British into regions they had never trod before, and traded on their prestige by proclaiming themselves to be white men, also. To a savage of the upper Congo, the difference between an Arab and a sunburnt, bearded Englishman, followed by a train of black bearers, could not have been apparent. Sir Frederick Lugard describes the slave-trader and his methods. He came first as a friend and settled down in the country by the leave and with the goodwill of the natives. The deference he

exacted from his followers, his guns, and the goods he displayed to their envious eyes, led the chiefs to suppose that he was a great man, the representative of an unknown power. In all these respects, his prestige was founded on precisely the same bases as that of the European settlers. It mattered little whether or not he was a pure Arab—he might be the offspring of some poor slave girl and his father the fortieth cousin to an Arab of Muscat. His language, Swahili, was soon picked up by his followers whose native tongue was probably close akin to it. Having collected a few slaves from the chiefs, in exchange for his calico, he bartered these on the coast for arms. These made him a valued ally and his co-operation always secured the victory to his side in tribal wars. Naturally, he became the beau-ideal of the young tribesmen. They imitated his dress, assumed his name, sat round his tent. He recruited a band named the Ruga-ruga whom he armed with muskets and sent forth in search of slaves. "To be enlisted in this band became the ambition of the young bloods. His Ruga-ruga are his dogs of war, ripe for carnage, revelling in blood."

In this way began many Arabs who came near to establishing empires in Central Africa. Such was Hamidi bin Mohammed, better known by his nickname, Tippu Tib, who befriended Livingstone and Cameron and delivered Stanley, at least on one occasion, from the man-eaters of the upper Congo. A man of high intelligence, he feared the power of the British and strove to keep on good terms with them. Why do the English try to ruin me by interfering with my trade? he asked Swann. He was told that we were sick of his cruelties and were determined to put an end to slavery. Perceiving

that they could not easily sell or exchange the natives they captured, some of the dealers seem to have thought of using them to build up empires. They converted tribes like the Manyema and Wanyamwezi to Islam and turned them into slave-raiders like themselves. The savage captured by these bandits, if he could handle a spear or use a musket, became one of them. Enslavement meant not to him, as to the negro sold to the white man, a life of hopeless animal toil; it offered to the daring and hardy an unlimited scope for ambition. It was well for Joseph he was sold to the Ishmaelites. Even the chieftainess, of whom Livingstone speaks, sold for adultery, would almost certainly find another husband, probably a better one than the old black fogey who had repudiated her. Stanley, speaking in 1884, admitted that the Arabs in their treatment of their slaves must be credited with not abusing their own interests. Except in very rare instances, the condition of the slaves was not worse than when they enjoyed their savage freedom. "If the Arab contented himself with buying slaves and were free from the charge of assisting to enslave the unfortunates, we should be deprived of much cause to complain of them." At least, they stamped out cannibalism wherever their power was felt. The native himself, it may be suspected, would rather have been a red-handed henchman of Tippu Tib than doomed to pick red rubber in the private domain of King Leopold. It is at least conjectural whether the peoples of south-central Africa would not have found fuller opportunities for self-expression and development under the Moslems than under the Europeans. Where the Arab applied a goad, we have imposed a yoke—and the yoke is for mild-eyed oxen.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of intense activity on the part of the various anti-slavery societies. Powers which had hitherto turned a deaf ear to the cry of humanity upon beholding the unsuspected riches of Africa, discovered within themselves extraordinary zeal for the relief of the fettered African. The Germans had had little share in the slave business and had done proportionately little for its suppression; but in the first years of William II's disastrous reign, Germans felt strangely drawn towards the work of liberation. Their flag was seen more and more often in African waters, their officers and men of science, among them the intrepid Major von Wissmann, displayed a suspicious curiosity about the resources of the interior. The apostolic zeal of France was enkindled by the thought of so many millions of potential fighting-men, who might one day be employed more usefully fighting the enemies of France than in their petty tribal wars. To Leopold, the sagacious king of the Belgians, was committed by an European congress the sublime mission of extending the blessings of civilization to the heathens of the Congo. The societies in London which organized anti-slavery congresses in Paris and Madrid and sent deputations to the Shah of Persia, to the Negus of Abyssinia, and to Prince Bismarck, were probably well aware of the mixture of motives which animated those in high authority, and they deftly exploited the Europeans' greed for the ultimate benefit of the African. The white settlers would make the natives their thralls if they could, and would prove worse masters than the Arab, but in the long run they could be got at and controlled by the force of European opinion, whereas no appeal lay from



the personal rule of the Moslem except to the law of the Koran.

The scramble for Africa began. In 1890, the dominions of the unfortunate Sultan of Zanzibar were divided between Germany and Britain, the latter declaring a protectorate over the capital and the adjoining islands and the former taking the mainland. Explorers, missionaries, consuls, prospectors, over-ran the country between the Indian Ocean and the newly discovered great lakes. The black man was astonished to hear that he was the subject of some state, the very name of which he had never heard. The Arabs took the alarm. Islam was losing Africa. In the deepest heart of the Continent, in the region between the upper Nile and the middle Congo, the trader Zobeir, afterwards a pasha of Egypt, subjugated the cannibal Nyam-nyam and compelled millions of savages to acknowledge him as lord. Outlaws of every kind flocked to his banner. He lived in barbaric state. In his ante-chambers he kept lions chained, as a sort of bodyguard. His immense wealth cannot have been derived from the sale of slaves, for where now was he to sell them?—but rather, one suspects, from dealings in ivory and from enforced tributes. Learning that a prince with whom he was at war found security against bullets in an amulet, Zobeir melted down twenty-five thousand dollars into bullets, since the charm which was effective against lead could not protect against silver.

In 1878, Zobeir was crushed by an Egyptian force commanded by Gessi Pasha. The natives flocked to welcome the invaders. Nearly ten thousand men, women and children had been swept away from the villages of the Bahr al Ghazal and dragged into slavery by Zobeir.

"At every minute," wrote Gessi, "natives arrived, asking, one, for his wife, another for his sister, another for his son, and so on. . . ." The Egyptians took Suleyman, Zobeir's son, and shot him. Zobeir was sent a prisoner to Cairo where he lived as a prisoner at large and endowed with a substantial pension by the Khedive. Gordon in 1879 had written, "I will buy slaves for my army; for this purpose I will make soldiers of them against their will, to enable me to prevent raids." Five years later, sent to Khartoum, to stem the Mahdist rising, he asked for the co-operation of the old slaver. It was refused, in deference to the protests of the anti-slavery organisations. Gordon fell and the Sudan was lost to Egypt. Zobeir might have preserved the land for the Khedive, but he would also have preserved it for slavery.

In 1888, Lord Salisbury announced a formidable revival of the slave-trader's activities in Central Africa. There was increased destruction owing to the more general use of fire-arms. Far south of the equator, the Moslems had plucked up courage on hearing of the success of the Mahdi and the fall of Khartoum. The German newcomers were massacred. On the shores of the Nyasa lake, a tiny band of Sikhs, led by Captain (afterwards Sir Frederick) Lugard fought the mongrel bandit Mlozi. A brisk campaign followed the fine defence of the post of Karungu's by half a dozen Englishmen. As the result of six years' fighting, Nyasaland was annexed to Britain. The Union Jack flew over the three great lakes of Eastern Central Africa.

In Uganda, the missionaries had been busy. The native monarch was distracted by the rivalry of his Protestant, Catholic and Mohammedan subjects. Cardinal Lavigerie,

a French prelate, devoted himself to the evangelization of Africa and the emancipation of the slave. In 1878, the Roman Catholic Church cannot be said to have entered too early into this particular field. In the United States, her clergy had remained conspicuously silent on the subject of slavery and so far as the present writer has been able to discover, took no part whatsoever in the work of emancipation. The Cardinal's White Fathers in their red tarbooshes, preaching in chapels built in the Moorish style, made a strong appeal to the people of Uganda. Unfortunately, the missionaries could not forget their own tongues, and they accused each other of promoting the interests of their respective countries under the cloak of religion. Civil war broke out between the sects. Hannington, an Anglican bishop, was murdered under a misapprehension. Order was restored, as is customary, by the British. Slavery had become as acute an issue in Uganda as in America. The Christian natives refused to restore the fugitive slaves of Moslems. These were not perhaps very numerous. Slavery in Uganda existed as a mild form of serfdom. Lugard admits he was often disconcerted by the disinclination of the slave to be freed. This condition was agreeable to the East African, among other reasons, it is asserted, because it enabled him to gratify his passion for travel and gadding-about by leaving his wife and family in the safe custody of his master. In the territory taken over by the British East African Company, George Mackenzie solved the vexed problem of domestic slavery by redeeming the slaves of the Arab gentry and setting them free; a conciliatory step which no doubt restrained the Arabs from attacking the British, at the moment the Germans were being fiercely assailed farther south.

With the downfall of the Mahdi and of Samori, the great West African slaver king, in the same year, 1898, the hopes of the Arabs finally expired. Wadai, the last and innermost stronghold of the slave power, was not, however, reduced by the French till the first decade of the present century. About the same time, in June 1909, the Sultan of Zanzibar decreed that slavery as a legal status ceased within his dominions. The decree provided for compensation to slaves to whom a previous master refused support if the slave's age or infirmities rendered him incapable of supporting himself. The decree reserved to concubines and their children the rights and privileges they enjoyed under Mohammedan law, provided the concubine did not leave her master without his consent. Slavery in the regions of Africa under European sway was legally abolished; and it was abolished, it will be observed, with compensation not to the owner but to the slave.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### BLACKBIRDING IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN

UPON the annexation of Africa, the Christian powers, we have seen, found no little difficulty in putting an end to domestic slavery. Upon proceeding to develop the resources of this and other lands which had come into their possession, they were soon confronted by the problems which had vexed the Spaniards in Hispaniola. In the nineteenth as in the sixteenth century, the aim of the white settler was to grub all the wealth he could out of the fresh soil, and in tropical climes, he preferred that the hard work should be done by others and done cheaply.

Most of Australia lies outside the tropics. It is looked on as a country eminently suited for Europeans, a land where Englishmen can earn their bread and amass riches under much the same conditions as at home. The rough ways had been smoothed for the earliest settlers by convicts, who achieved more at the antipodes than our undesirables did in the American colonies. The gold rush in Victoria was not accompanied by any demand for coloured labour. But in the sixties of the last century, it was discovered that sugar which had made the fortune of the West Indies could be profitably produced in Northern Queensland. The industry was not one to attract the British working man. In this particular part of the British Commonwealth, we understand, more than twenty

days in the year are set apart as public holidays. The aborigines of Australia were not perhaps docile enough to work on the new plantations; Indian coolies might have been requisitioned if the sugar growers had not been reminded that the innumerable islands of the Pacific supported a dark skinned race very proper for the purposes of the white employer. Skippers who had passed their lives trading among those islands, were now provided with Government licences and commissioned to recruit labourers for the Queensland plantations. The trade was pleasantly called blackbirding.

At the end of the year 1871, England was shocked by the news of the death of the missionary bishop, Pattison, at the hands of the south sea islanders. On enquiry, it was learnt that he had been killed by way of retaliation for a series of outrages committed by the white men upon the natives. Queen Victoria, through her ministers, was called on to protect the savages of her farthest-flung dominions, like Queen Isabel the Catholic, three hundred and seventy years before. People's eyes were opened by such letters as were sent home by one of the crew of H.M.S. *Basilisk*, dated from the Queensland coast, February 5th, 1872: "The schooner, about eighty tons, appeared filled with Polynesians. We immediately sent the first-lieutenant and the gig to board her, but as they seemed inclined to show fight, we sent the cutter, armed, to assist. When they got aboard, they found twelve blacks all right, one dying and three dead of starvation, the ship stinking like a pest-house, so that all our men were sick. They were the most frightful-looking wretches I ever saw. The very bones were sticking through the skin. . . ." The boat was the *Peri* which had sailed from Fiji on December

27th, 1871, with three white men and fifty Polynesians aboard. The blacks, it is supposed, had risen and killed their kidnappers.<sup>1</sup>

In November 1872, the methods resorted to by the labour traders were revealed to the Australian public. In the previous year, the ship *Carl* left Melbourne for Fiji, with a general cargo. Her owner, Dr. James P. Murray, went with her as surgeon, and the captain having left, the mate, Armstrong, took command in his stead. From Fiji, they sailed to the New Hebrides, and having failed to get any natives there they called at Palmer's Island. To win the confidence of the people, the mate dressed himself in the black coat and shovel hat of a missionary. This artifice having proved ineffectual, they went on to another island, and here by displaying brightly coloured goods, they coaxed the islanders to come out to the ship. As soon as the canoes were alongside, the captain and his officers hurled weights of iron down into them. The blacks were thrown into the water, were fished out by the crew, and thrown into the hold. In this manner, about eighty were collected. In the night of September 12th, 1871, a disturbance was heard among them, and was quieted by some pistol shots being fired over their heads. But the trouble was soon renewed and the whites, probably in a state of panic, kept up a steady fire on the helpless men all through the night. In the morning they discovered about fifty dead, which, together with sixteen badly wounded, were at once thrown overboard, some being tied hand and foot.

Murray's part in the affair is obscure. To save his skin, he reported the grim business to the consul at Fiji, with the result that he, the captain and the mate were tried for

<sup>1</sup> Laird Clowes, *History of the Royal Navy*.

murder on their return to Australia. Murray having given queen's evidence, escaped; the two other criminals were sentenced to death, but the extreme penalty was not inflicted.

For a time the trade was carried on more humanely or more discreetly; but in 1884, the captain of the *Hopeful* was tried at Brisbane for the murder of a native. In the following year, a Royal Commission reported that the South Sea labour traffic was reproducing all the worst features of the old slave trade. The cruise of the *Hopeful* was one long record of deceit, cruel treachery, deliberate kidnapping and cold-blooded murder. The exact nature of their engagements was not explained to the natives. The recruiting agents had not hesitated to shoot or drown those who hindered them. It is stated that to obtain "recruits" from the head-hunting communities, the traders offered the much-prized heads in exchange; which means, of course, that one man had to be murdered for every labourer impressed. Wawn, a trader, repudiating the charge of buying or stealing natives, says that the community insisted on being paid "compensation" for every young man who voluntarily engaged himself. When a native in Queensland spoke of himself as having been stolen, he was merely complaining, we are asked to believe, that this compensation for the loss of his services or companionship had not been paid to his chief.

The Government of Queensland took prompt and firm action to prevent the introduction of slavery in any shape or form into the colony. All the natives who had been imported were collected from the plantations and despatched to their homes on board the ship *Victoria*. To each was given a bundle of "trade" or goods ranging



from £3 to £6 in value, according to his length of service, and in the case of those who had died a similar bundle was sent to their relatives. Four hundred were repatriated, but seventy elected to remain behind. In 1901, all Polynesians were ordered to be sent home and their further importation was made illegal.

This drastic action was no doubt partly dictated by the Australian working man's dread of foreign competition. It excited very bitter feeling among the planters in the northern or tropical half of the colony. For some time they talked of separation. The mother country also came in for a fair share of abuse.

Similar divergences of interests within the British commonwealth have occurred within our own day and may be expected to recur. In South Africa, the white man disdains the rougher sort of toil and is content to leave it to the coloured labourers, so long as he is guaranteed a monopoly of the skilled trades. In the young Kenya colony, the settlers appear to be aiming at a kind of feudal society based on the service and subjection of the native races. In both parts of the Continent, these policies are obviously inconsistent with the development of the people. In Nigeria, the country is jealously preserved by British officials for the benefit of its black inhabitants. Generally speaking, the native is safer under the direct rule of Downing Street than under a colonial or "dominion" authority. Human nature cannot easily withstand the temptation to profit by the labour of another man. The day has not yet come when the sentinels mounted by the anti-slavery societies can afford to relax for one moment the vigilance which has so powerfully contributed to the civilization of the world and the honour of the British flag.

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